Rubens

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Masters of Art

Sir Peter Paul Rubens

(1577-1640)

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RUBENS by S. L. Bensusan
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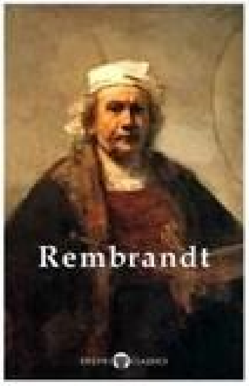

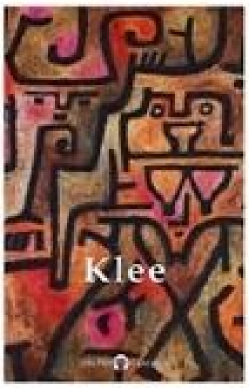

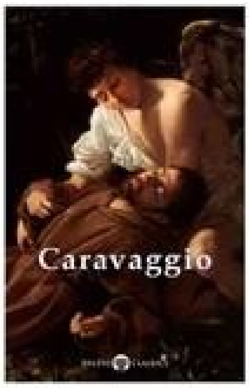
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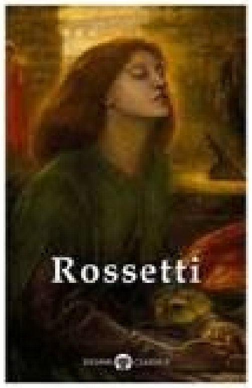

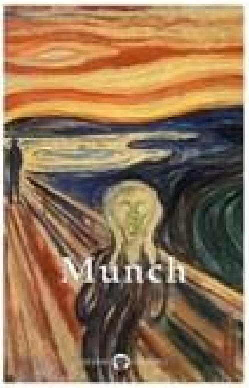

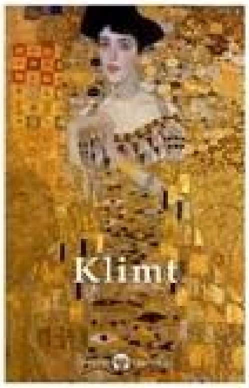

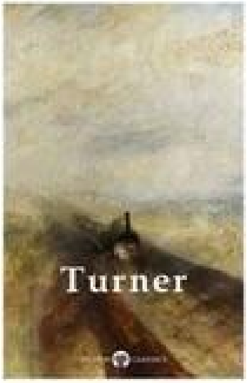

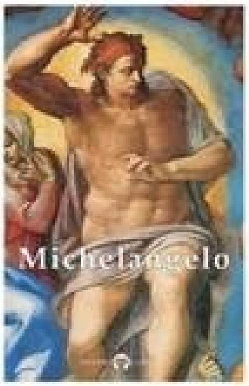
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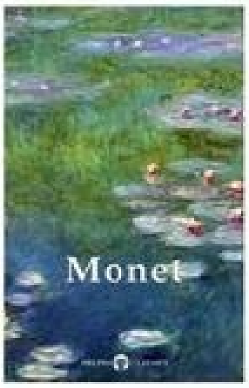

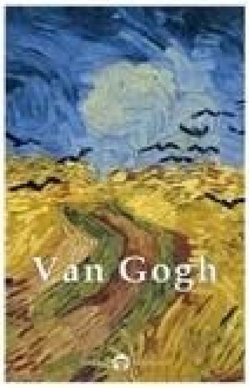

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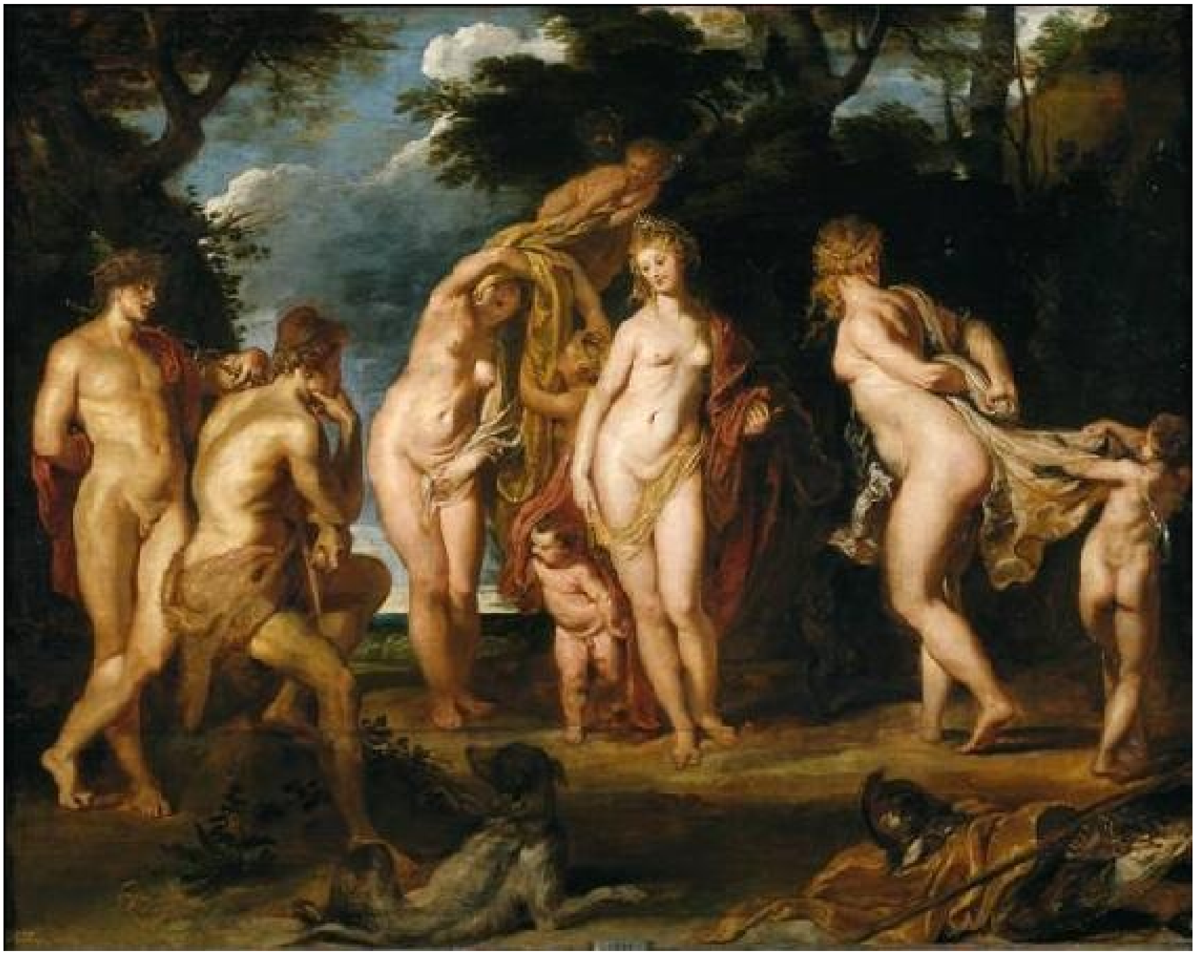
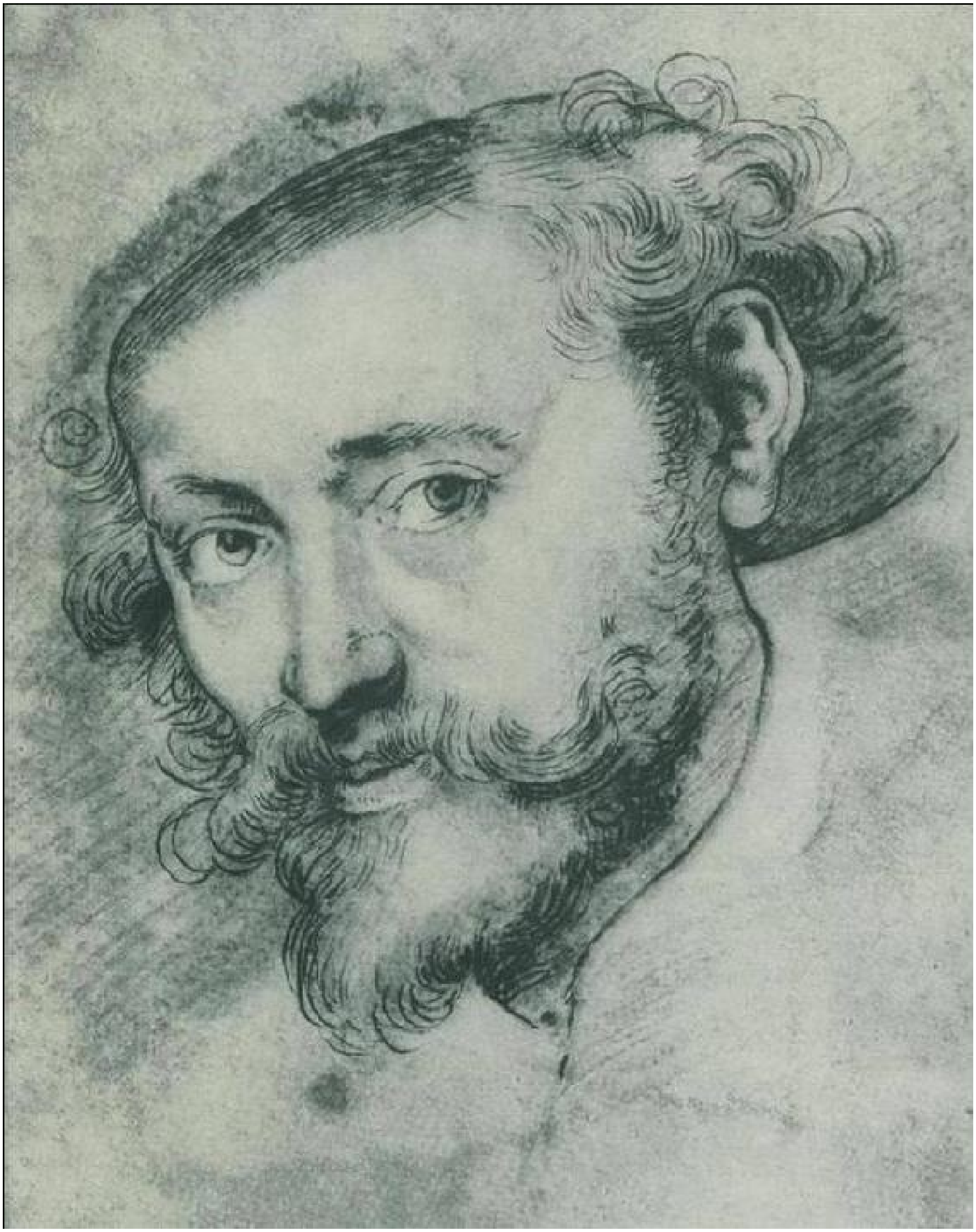


By Delphi Classics, 2015

The Highlights

Siegen, a German city in the south Westphalian part of North Rhine-Westphalia — Rubens' birthplace



Possible self-portrait of Rubens as a young man

THE HIGHLIGHTS

In this section, a sample of some of Rubens' most celebrated works is provided, with concise introductions, special 'detail' reproductions and additional biographical images.

ADAM AND EVE

Peter Paul

Rubens was born in the German city of Siegen, Nassau-Dillenburg, to Jan Rubens and Maria Pypelincks. Following the increased religious turmoil and persecution of Protestants during the Duke of Alba's reign of the Spanish Netherlands, Rubens'

Calvinist parents fled Antwerp for Cologne in 1568. Jan Rubens settled at the court of Anna of Saxony, the second wife of William I of Orange, in Siegen in 1570, becoming first the legal advisor and then the lover of Anna. In consequence of his father's imprisonment for this affair, Rubens' mother decided to return to Cologne the following year. In 1589, two years after his father's death, Rubens moved with his mother to Antwerp, where he was then raised as a Catholic. Religion was to figure prominently in much of his work and the artist later became one of the leading voices of the Catholic Counter-Reformation style of painting.

In Antwerp,

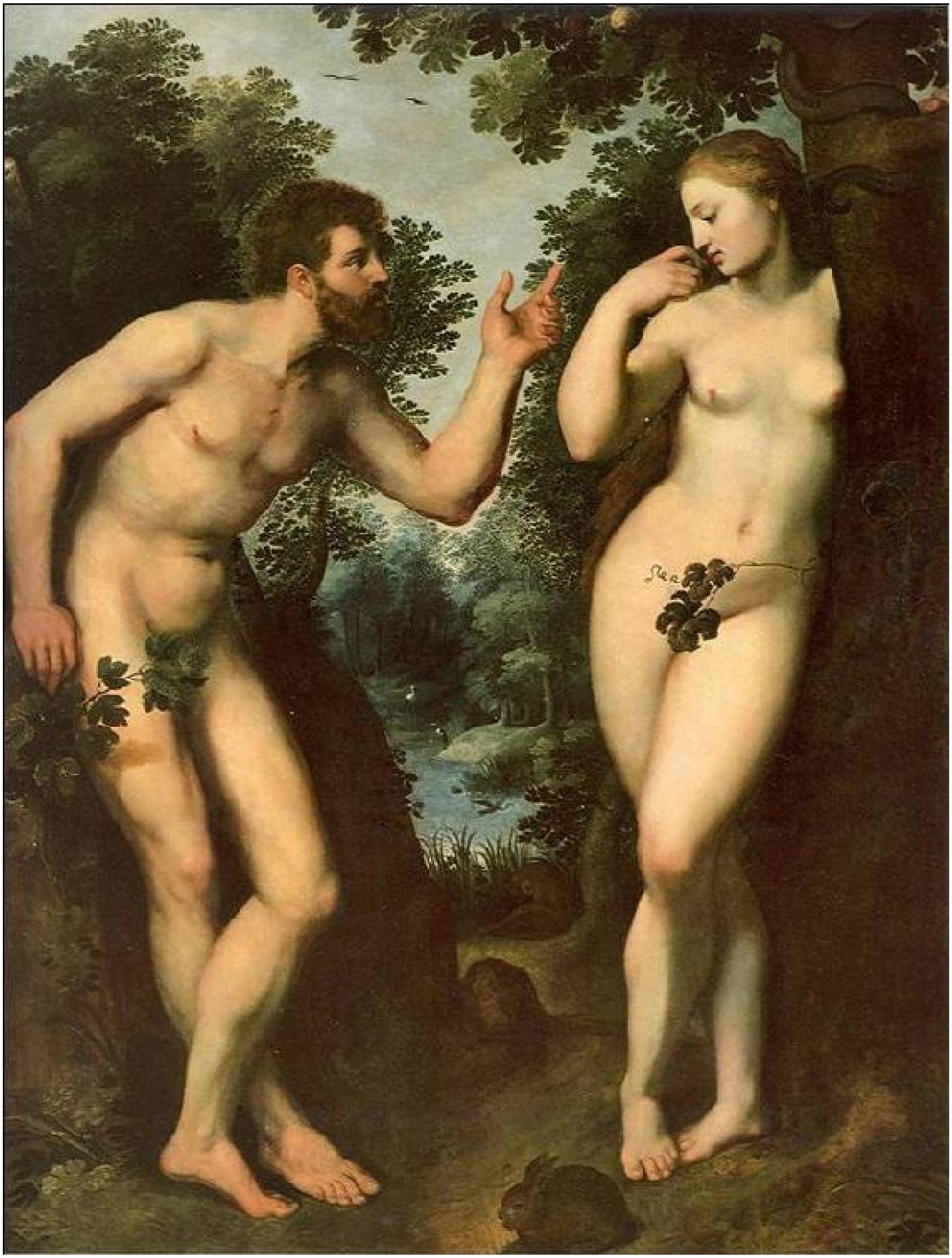
Rubens received a humanist education, studying Latin and classical literature, before starting his artistic apprenticeship with Tobias Verhaeght at the age of fourteen. Subsequently, he studied under two of the city's leading painters of the time, the late Mannerist artists Adam van Noort and Otto van Veen. Much of Rubens'

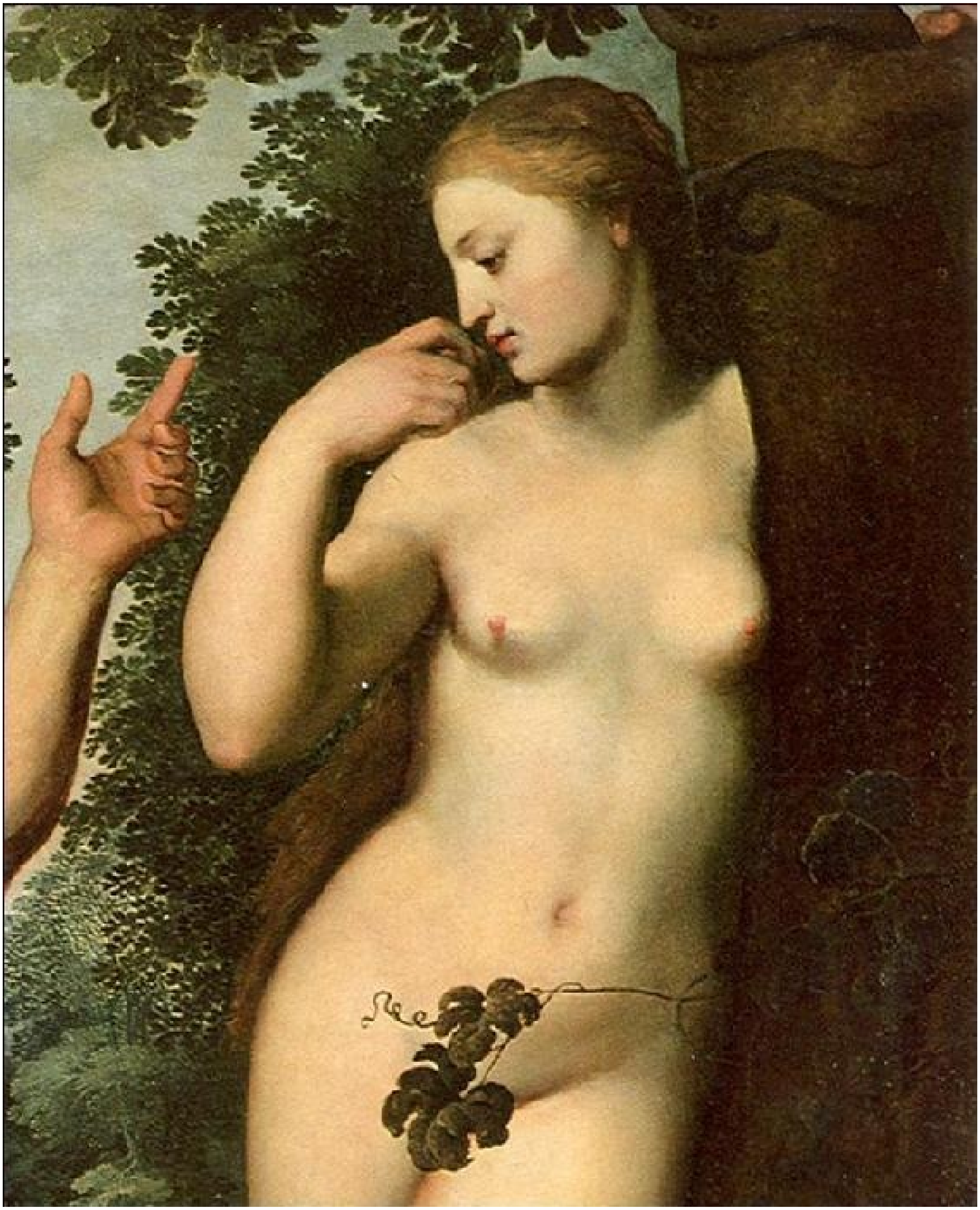
earliest training involved copying the works of great masters, such as woodcuts by Hans Holbein the Younger and Marcantonio Raimondi's engravings after Raphael. Rubens completed his education in 1598, at which time he entered the Guild of St. Luke as an independent master in his own right.

Held in the Rubenshuis in Antwerp, *Adam and Eve*, a panel depicting the fall from grace of the biblical first humans, is one of the few surviving paintings from this period. The panel demonstrates the influence of Otto van Veen, Rubens' last and most influential teacher. The use of colour, with predominant cool hues of green and blue and the finely clear contours are also reminiscent of van Veen’s work. Rubens’ treatment of the figures and the landscape is notably static and precise, though his forthcoming time in Italy would allow the young artist’s style greater freedom, when his use of colour would become more expressive.

The poses of the figures are taken from a print of the subject by Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael, though Rubens gives them new life, with Adam more muscular and closely observed, as the head is turned out of pure profile to allow more expression to be seen in the face. Eve is more idealised in form and beauty, perhaps hinting at the young artist’s limited experience of painting the female nude. She is softer and more sensuous than Vacnius’ figures, her raised hand enclosing the apple as if she is about to bite it, while the close proximity of Adam’s open hand to her arm stresses the tension of the moment.

Although little is known about the early history of the panel, it may be one of the works described as ‘beautiful’, which according to Rubens’ mother’s will of 1606, he deposited in her house before leaving for Italy in 1600.





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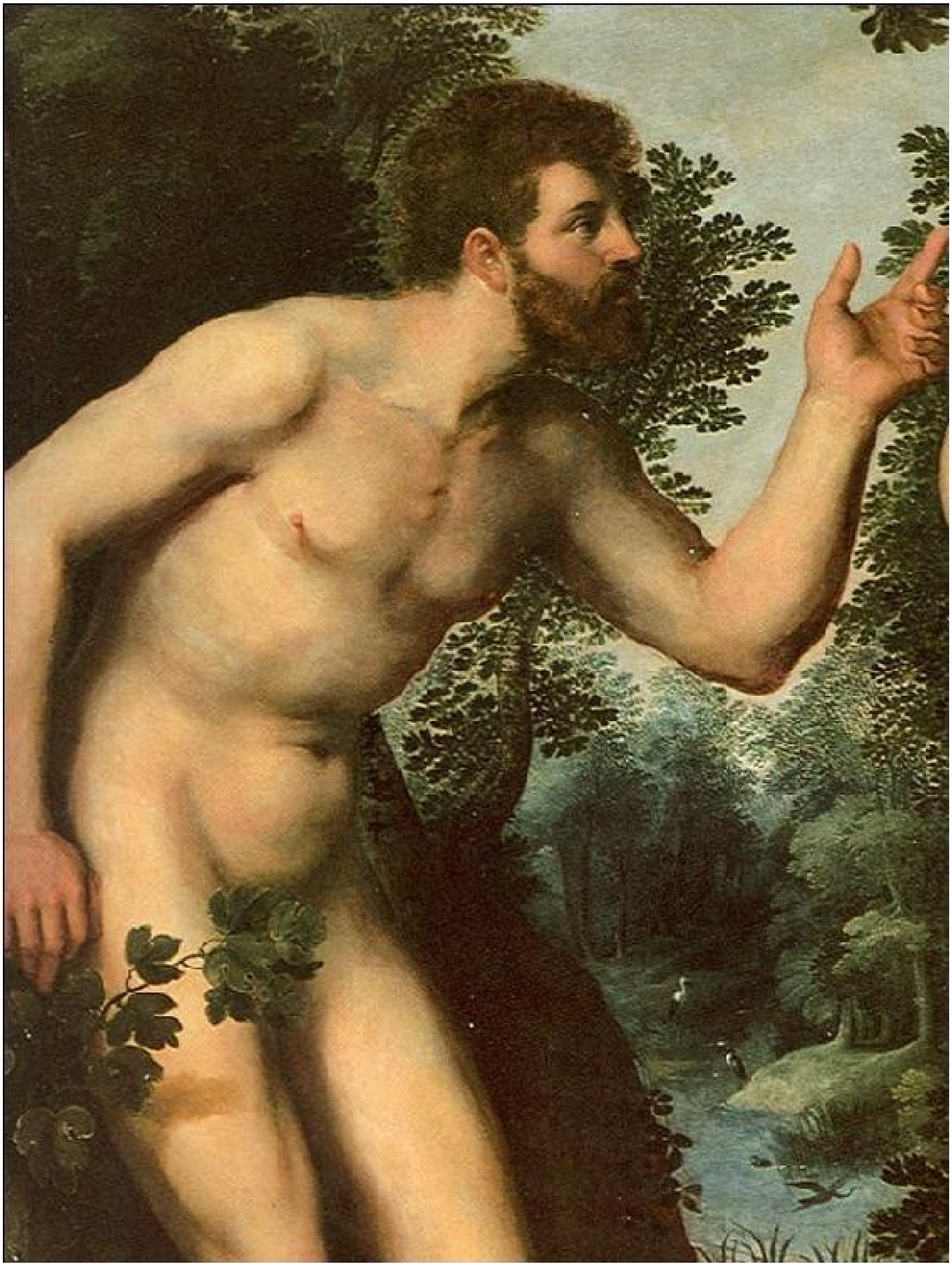

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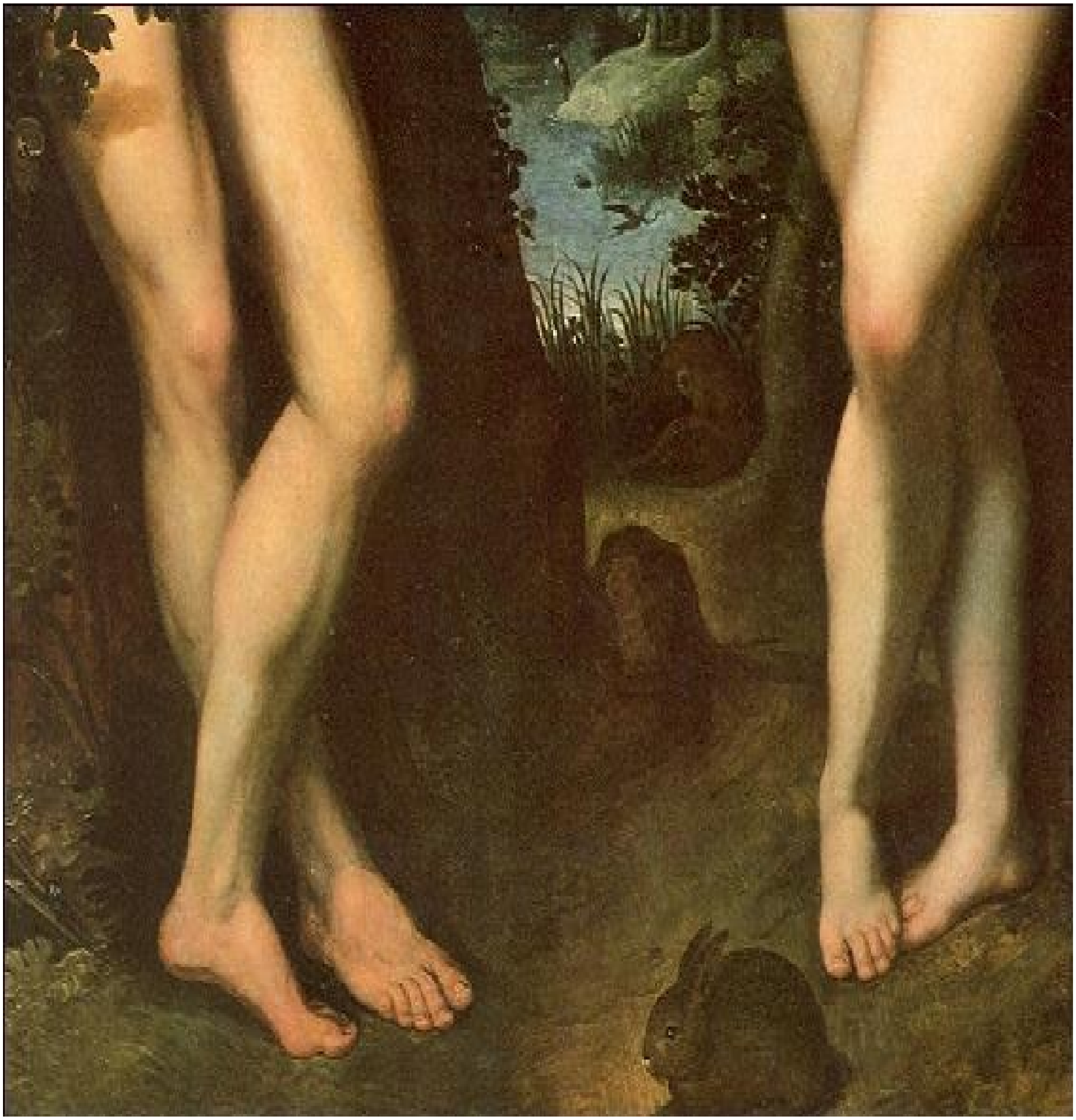

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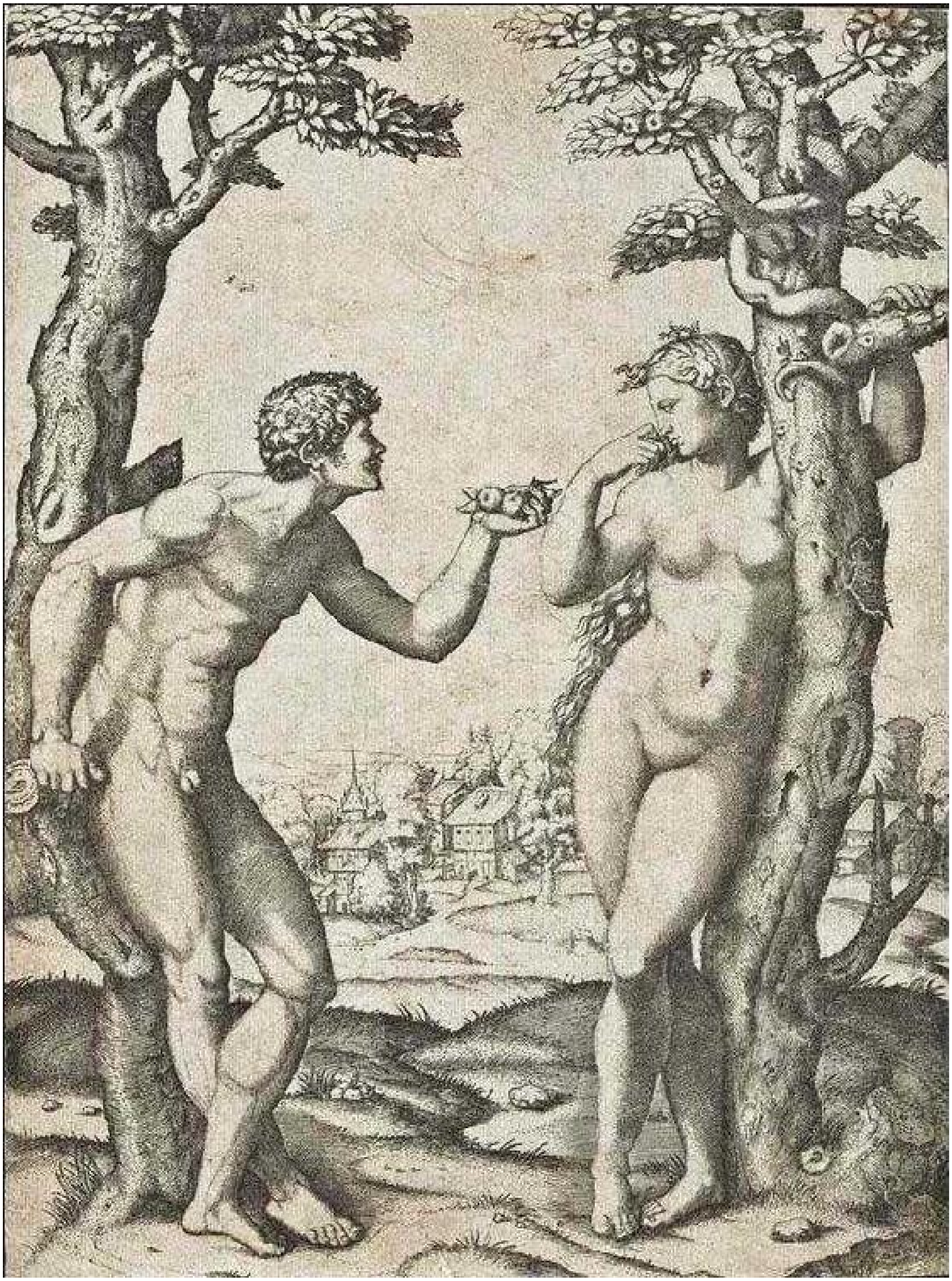


'Adam and Eve' by Marcantonio Raimondi, 1512-1514

THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS

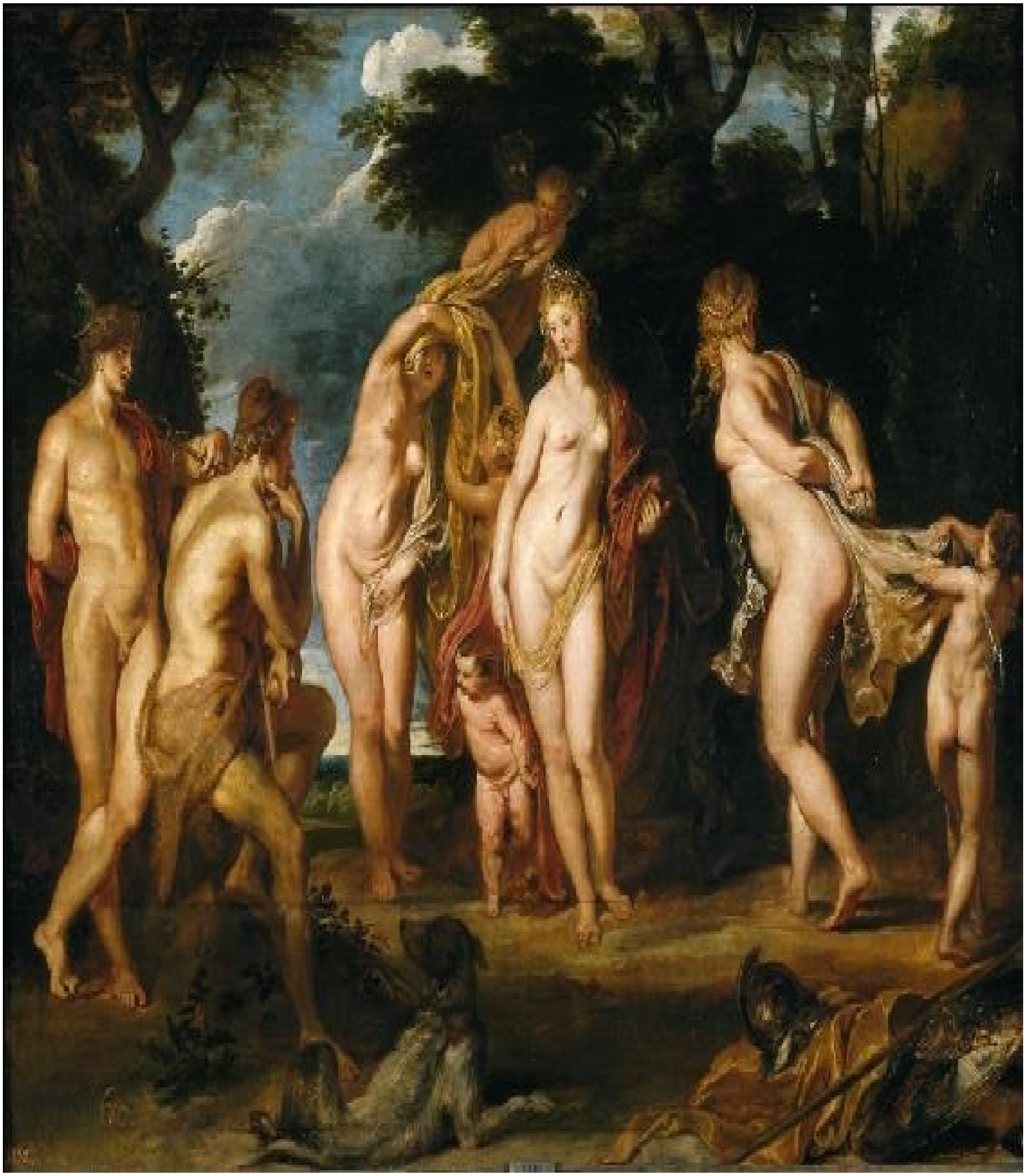
Housed in London’s National Gallery, this canvas depicts a scene from the beginning of the mythical Trojan War cycle, concerning a beauty contest in which the shepherd Paris must decide which of three goddesses is the fairest. The prize is a golden apple, which the uninvited goddess of discord had tossed among the Olympian guests at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Inscribed “To the fairest,” the apple was simultaneously claimed by Aphrodite, Hera and Athena. Paris, the son of King Priam of Troy, was asked to be the judge of a contest in which he should award the apple to goddess he deemed the most beautiful. Eventually, he gives the apple to Venus, goddess of love, as she had promised him the hand of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. It would be this event that would ultimately lead to the famous ten year war between the Greeks and the Trojans. *The Judgement of Paris* is a popular choice of subject in seventeenth century art and Rubens himself painted several very different versions of the scene during his long career.

In the early National Gallery canvas, he adopts a rich palette and sensuous modelling of the figures, demonstrating a blend of his Flemish heritage and his interest in Greek and Roman antiquity. Influenced by Michelangelo and Raphael, the artist also utilises the chiaroscuro of Caravaggio and the colouring effects of Titian.

Destined to be a frequent subject of Rubens’ art, Venus is represented at the supreme moment of her triumph, with no hint of the tragic cost of the judgment.

She is the preordained victor, crowned in beauty in an almost sacred manner.

His earliest rendering of the subject is based, once again, on an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi, after a lost composition by Raphael. The choice of subject gave Rubens an opportunity to develop nude figures in a grand classical manner, which technique he was to adopt often throughout his career. As well as the three goddesses, accompanied with the heroic forms of Paris and Mercury, the artist includes additional figures to the woodland scene. Two satyrs, a nymph and a muscle-bound river god are depicted to the right of the image, helping to reinforce the magical impression of the mythical world.



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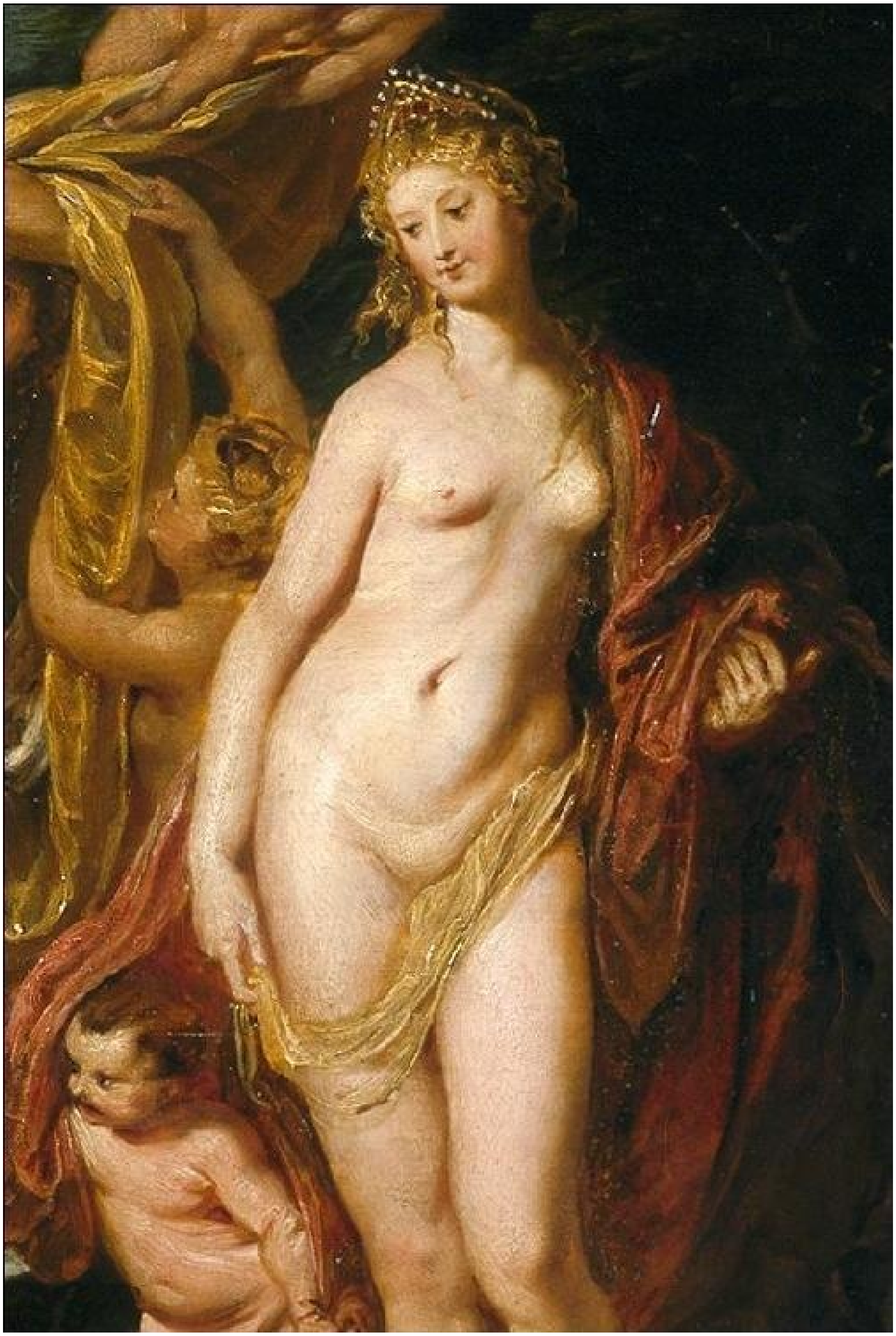

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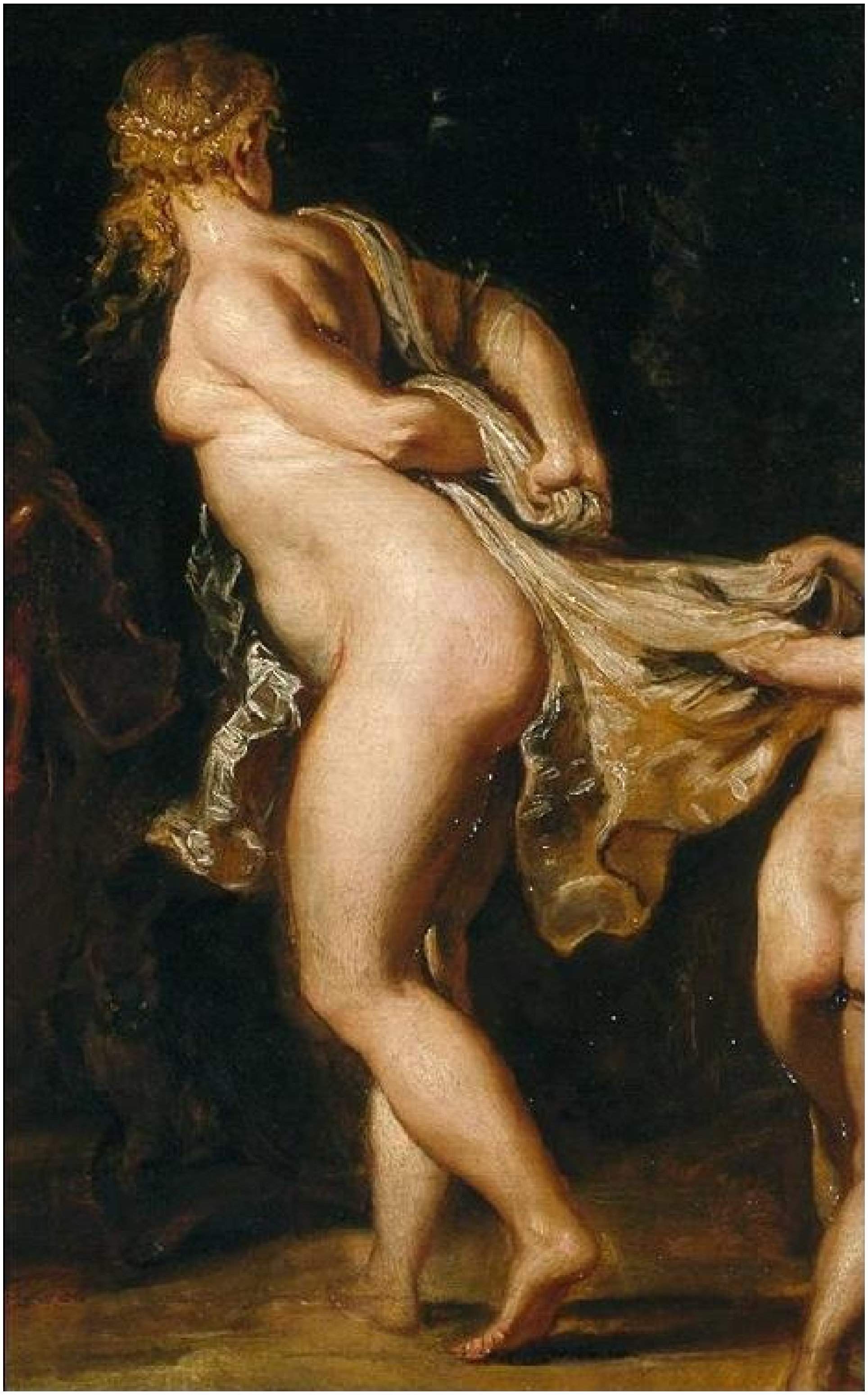

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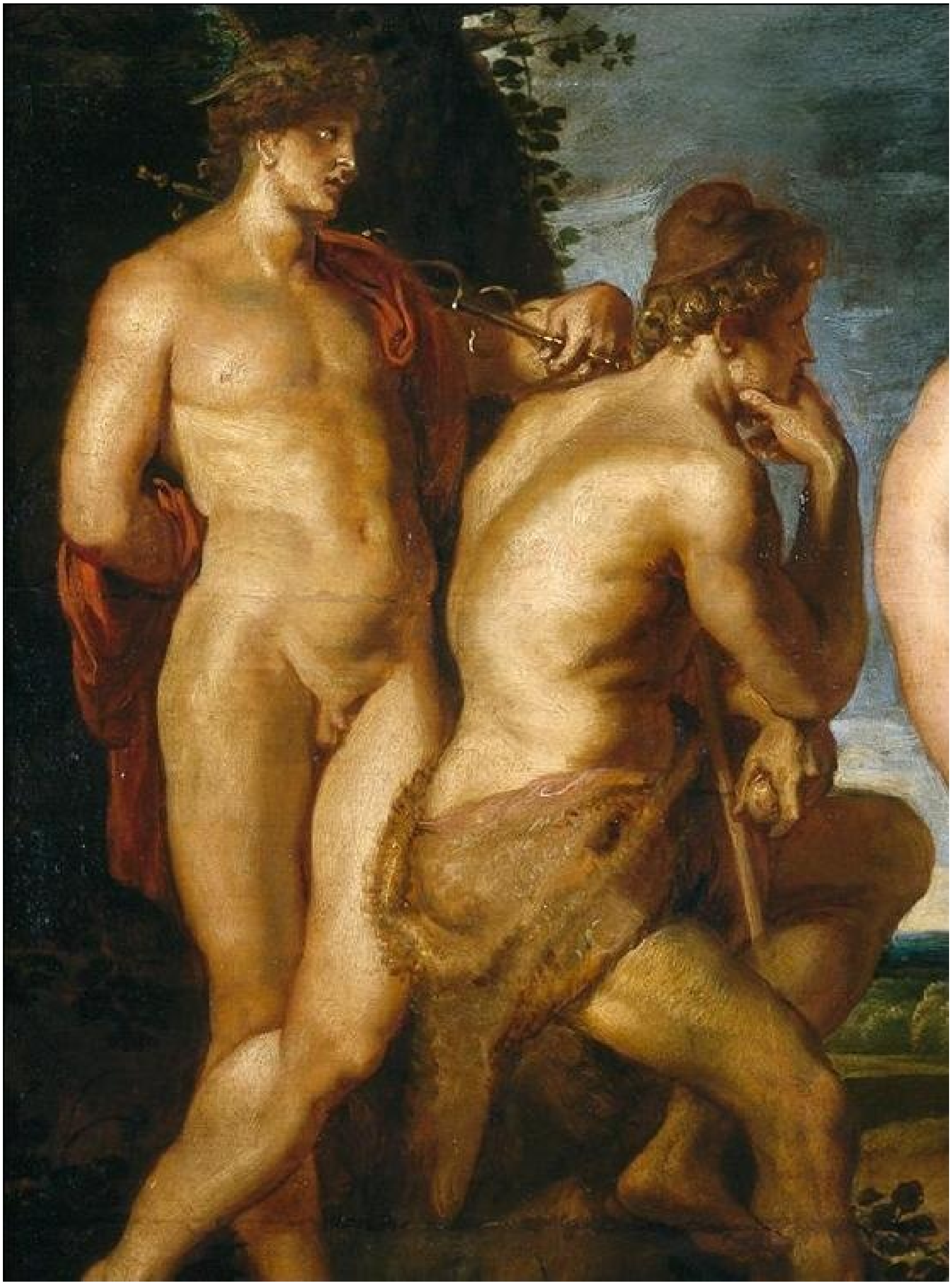

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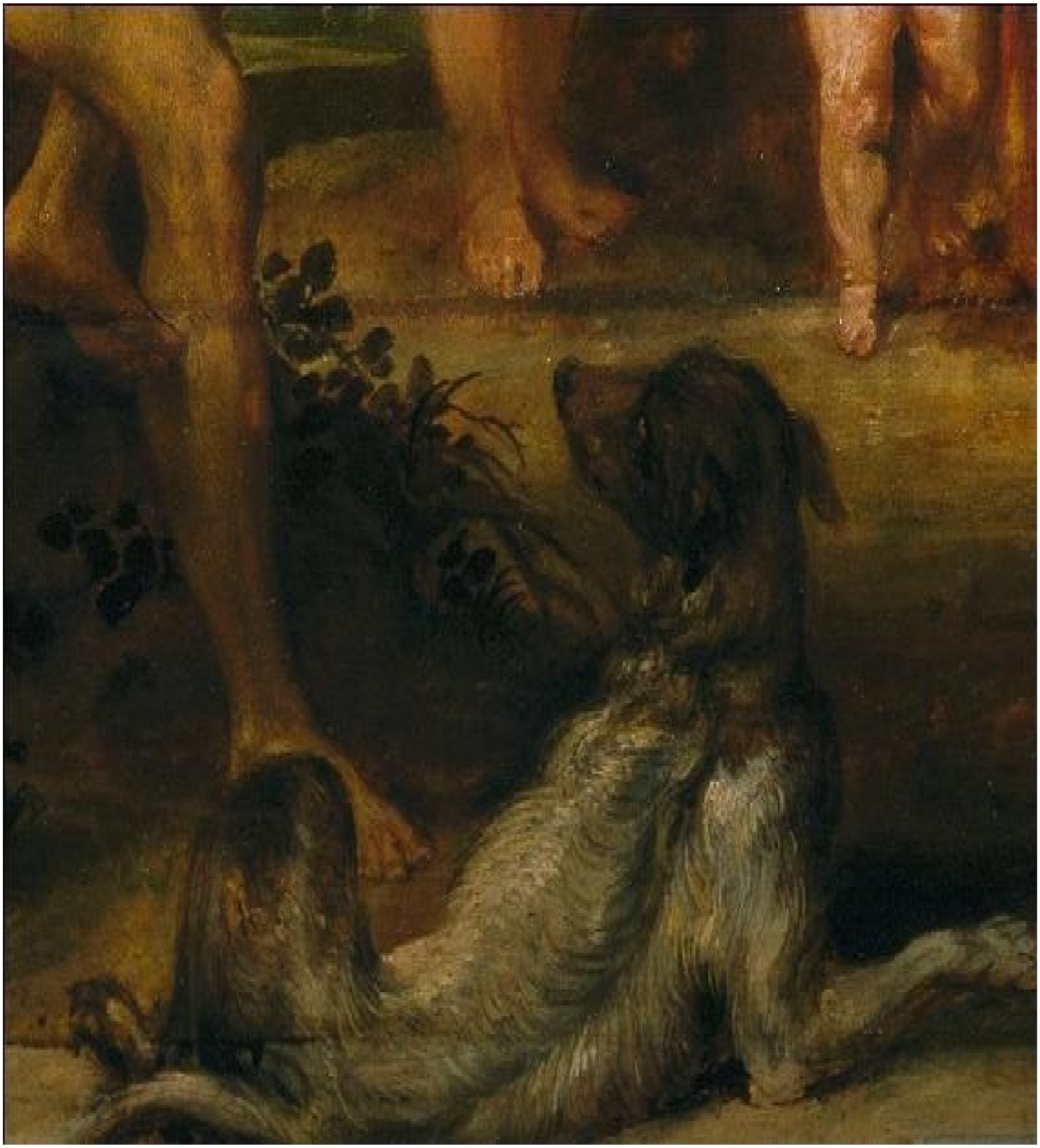

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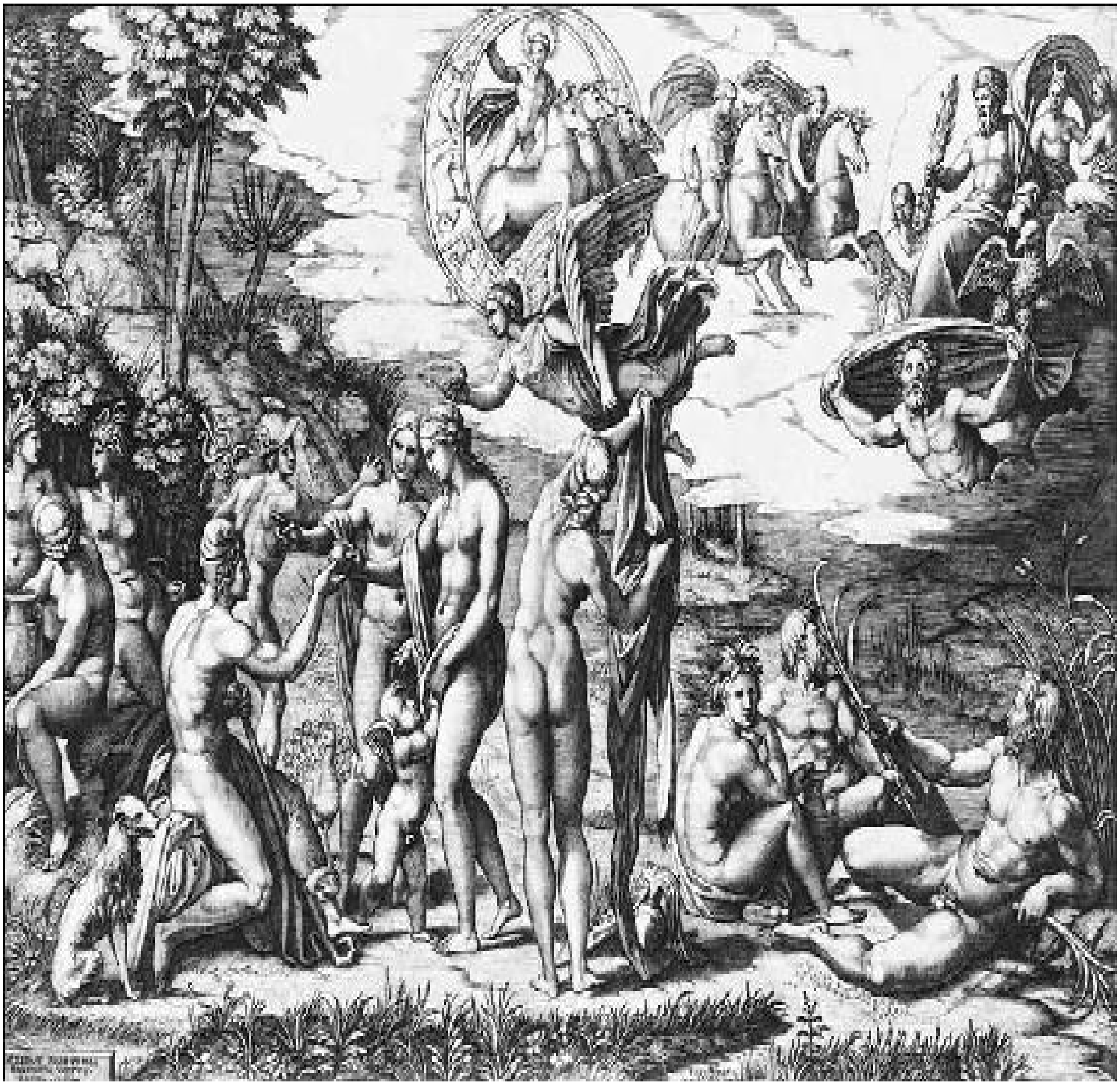
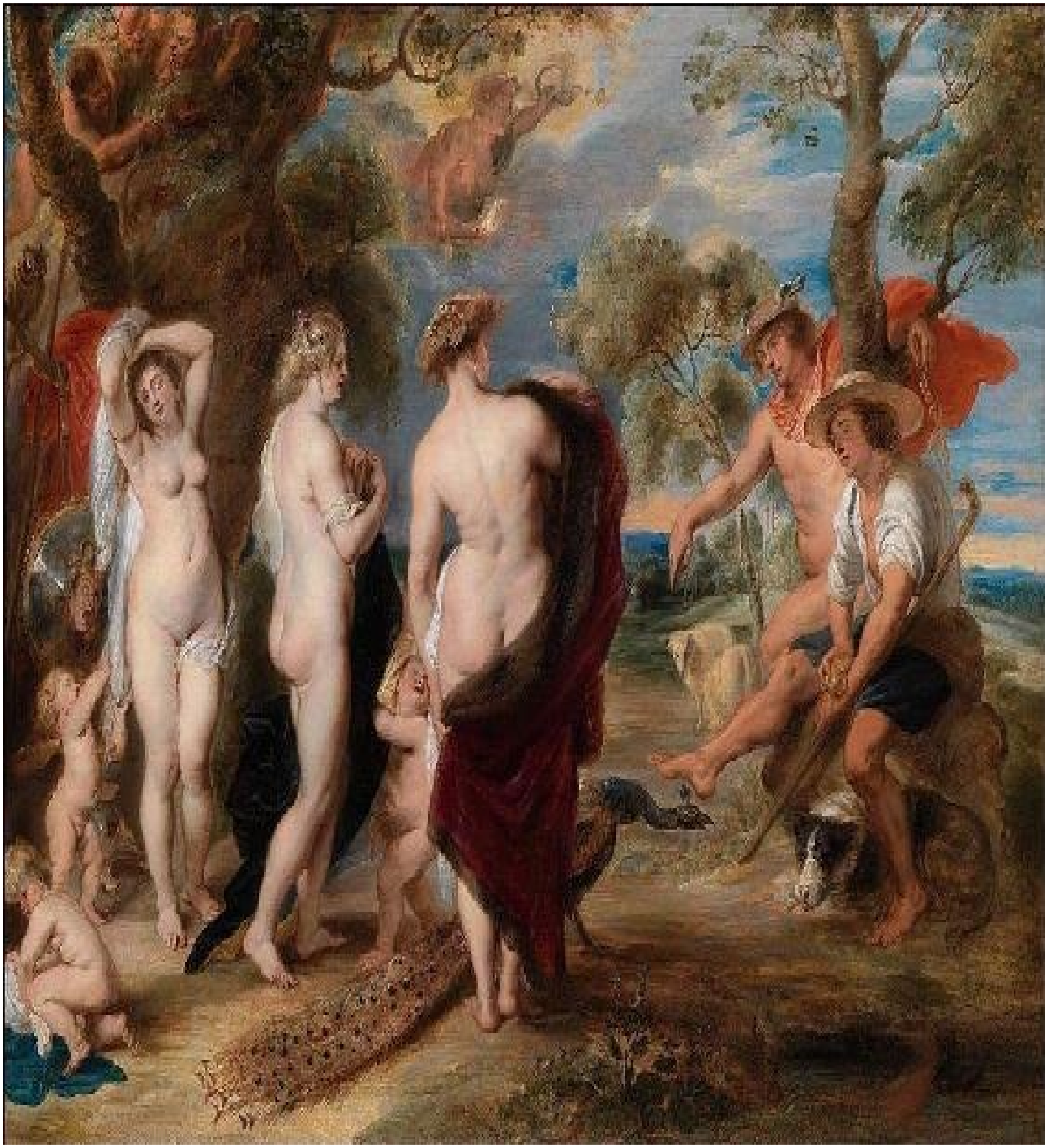


‘Judgement of Paris’ by Marcantonio Raimondi, 1514-18



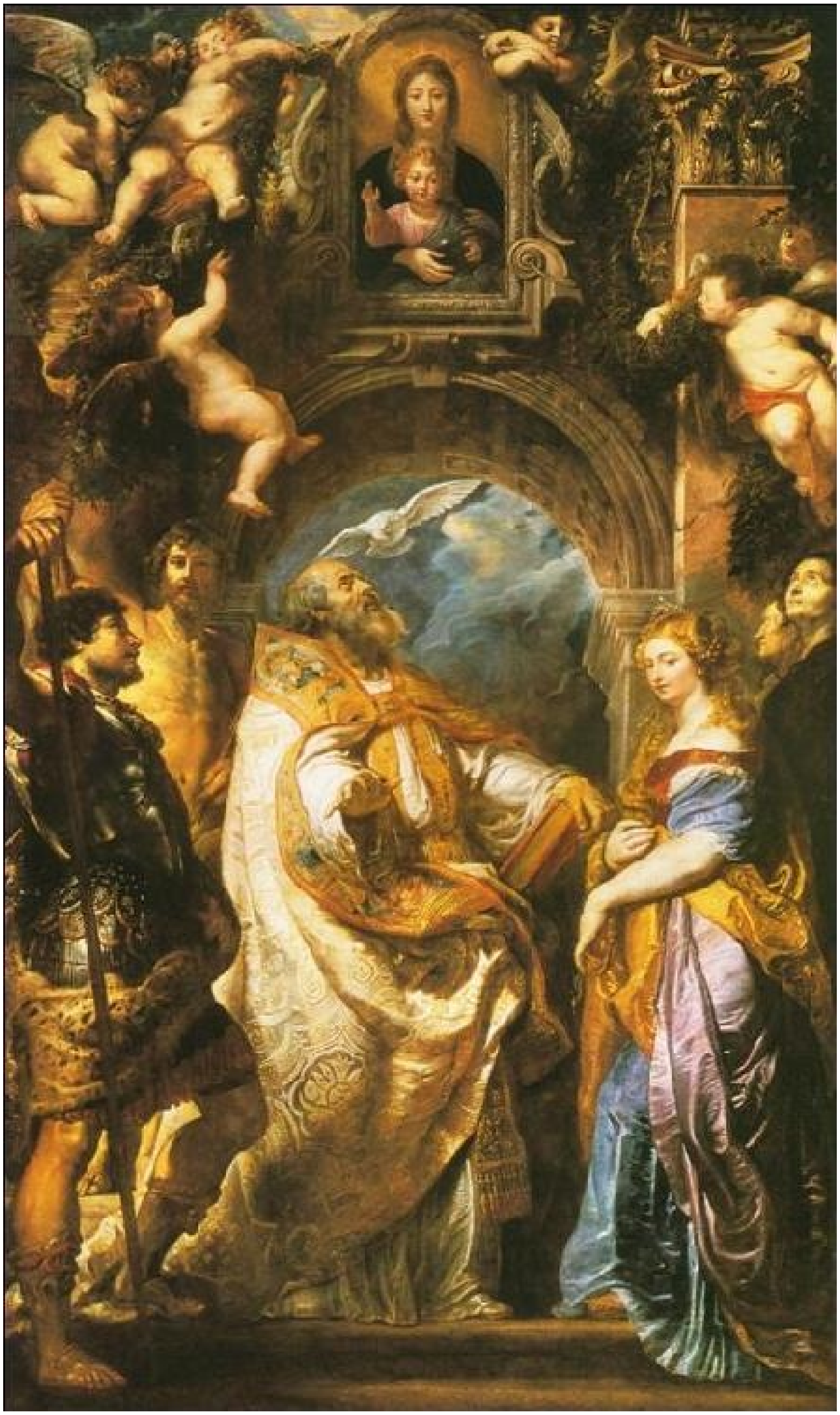
'The Judgement of Paris Peter Paul Rubens', c. 1636, National Gallery, London

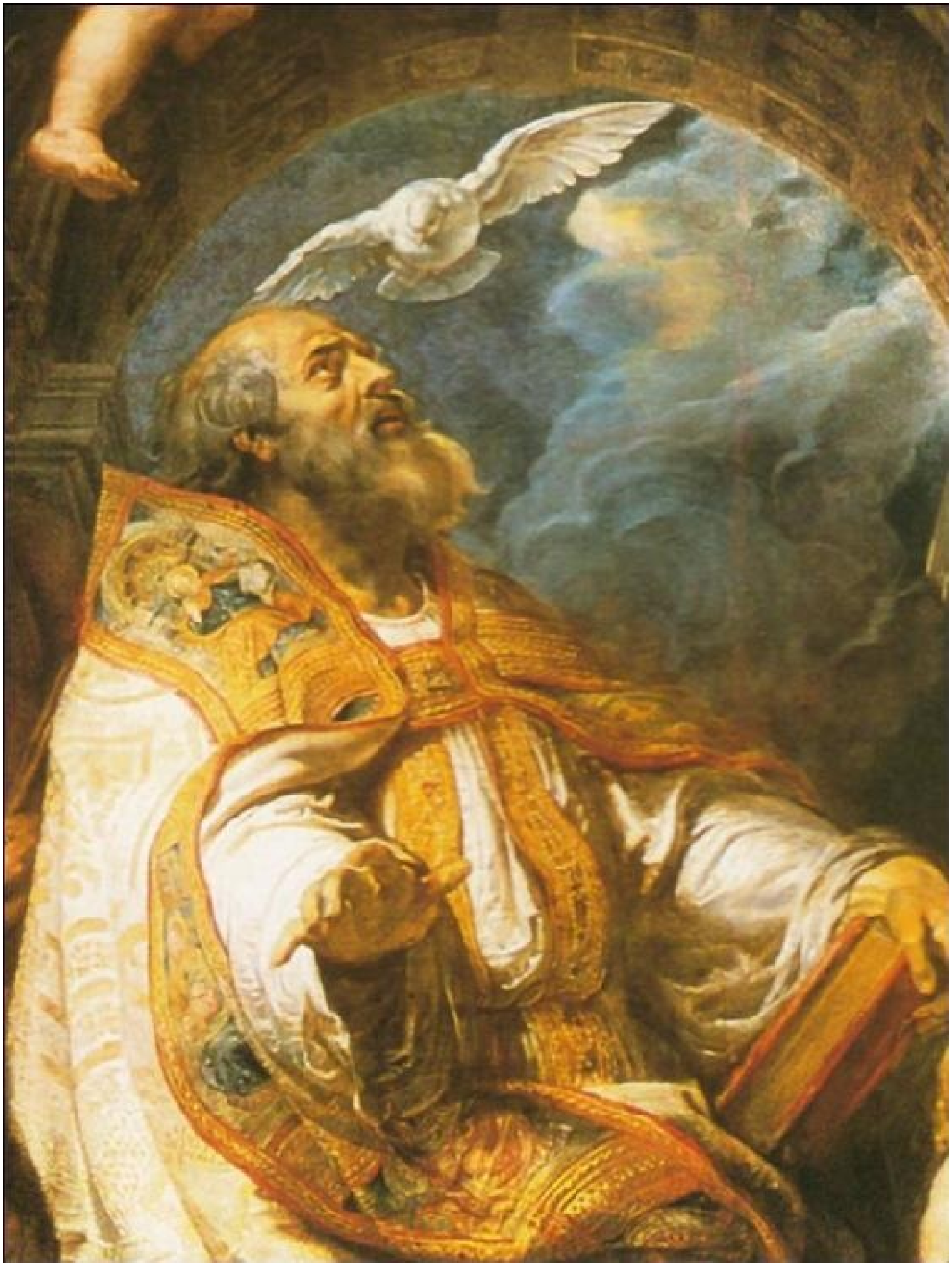
THE MADONNA DI VALLICELLA, ST. GREGORY THE GREAT AND SAINTS

From 1606 to 1608, Rubens was mostly in Rome, where, with the assistance of Cardinal Jacopo Serra (the brother of Maria Pallavicini), he received his most important commission to date for the High Altar of the city's most fashionable church, Santa Maria in Vallicella, also known as the Chiesa Nuova. The subject of the piece was to be St. Gregory the Great and various important local saints adoring an icon of the Virgin and Child. The first version, a single canvas was immediately replaced by a second version on three slate panels, allowing the actual miraculous holy image of the "Santa Maria in Vallicella" to be revealed on important feast days by a removable copper cover, also painted by the artist.

The painting presents several early saints and martyrs, including Papianus and Maurus on the left; the regal virgin and martyr Domitilla is positioned on the right with her martyred servants Nereus and Achilleus. However, Gregory the Great commands the central place of the composition, as he gazes up to heaven and the Dove of the Holy Spirit flies overhead. The saint's pose is reminiscent of Raphael's Aristotle in the *School of Athens*, as he grips a large folio of his writings.

On completion of the painting, due to problems of reflected light in the church sanctuary, the masterpiece was barely visible from the ground. Therefore, Rubens expanded the subject to fill three separate slate panels, creating a tripartite, presenting attendant saints witnessing the apotheosis.





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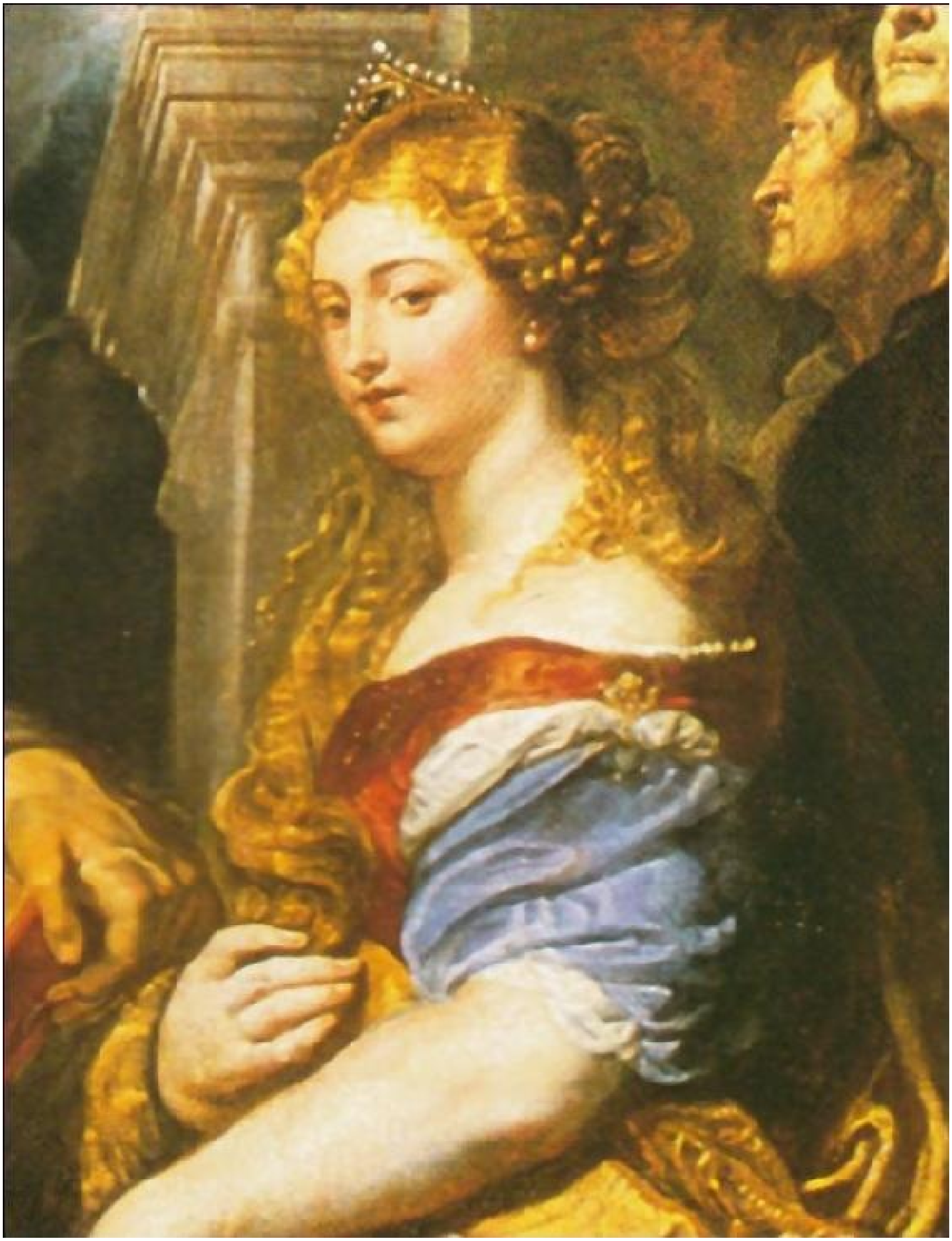

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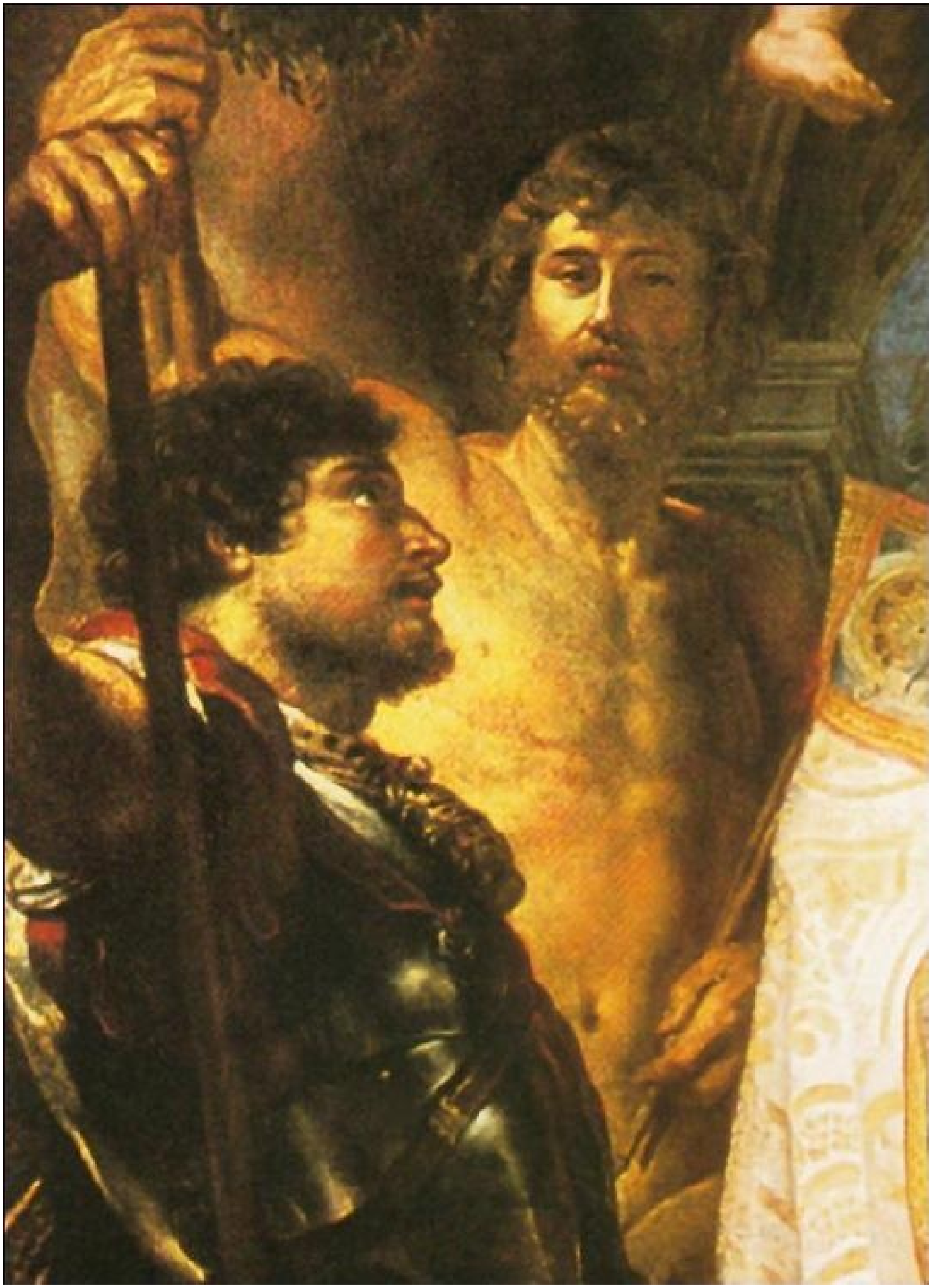

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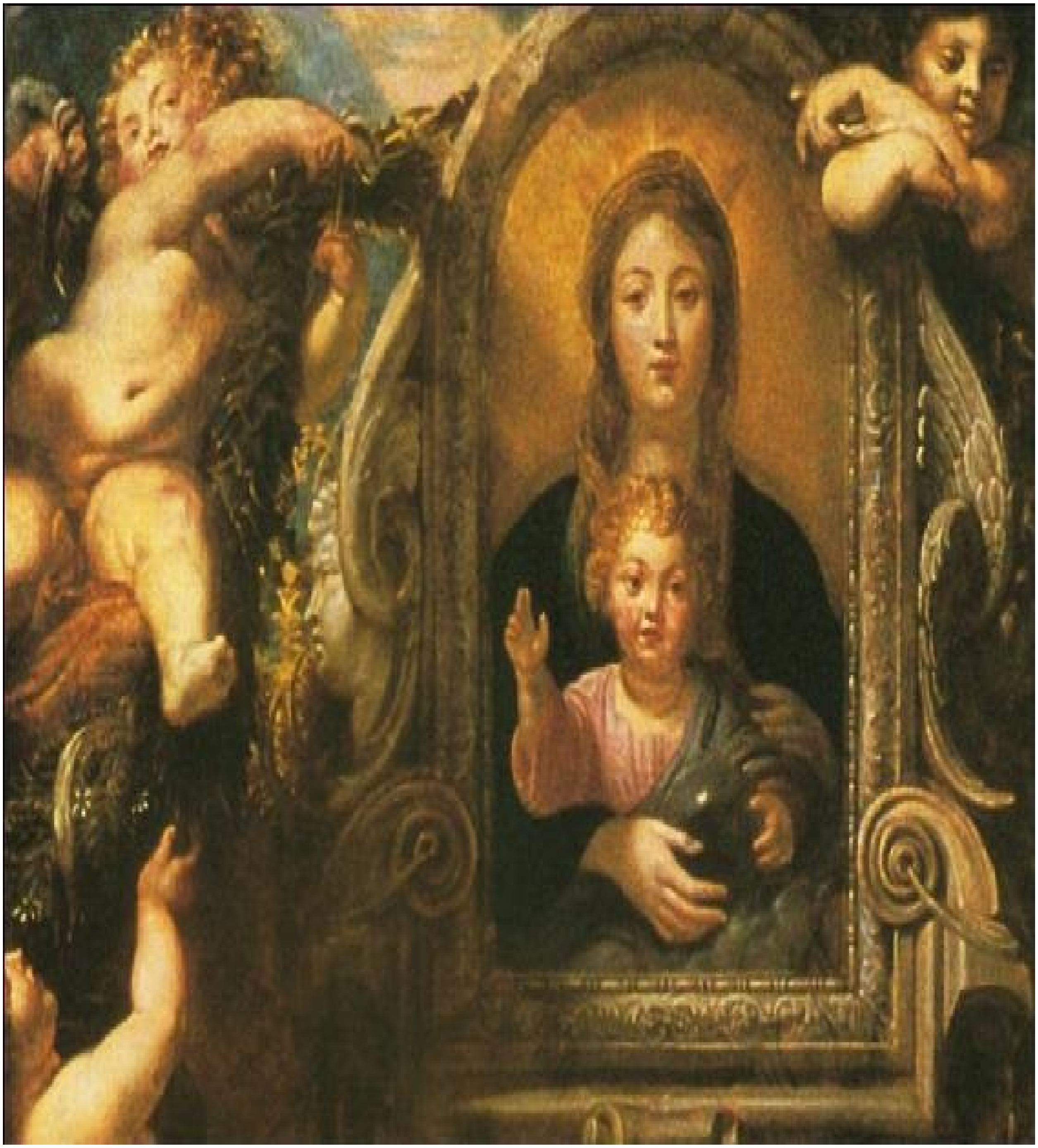

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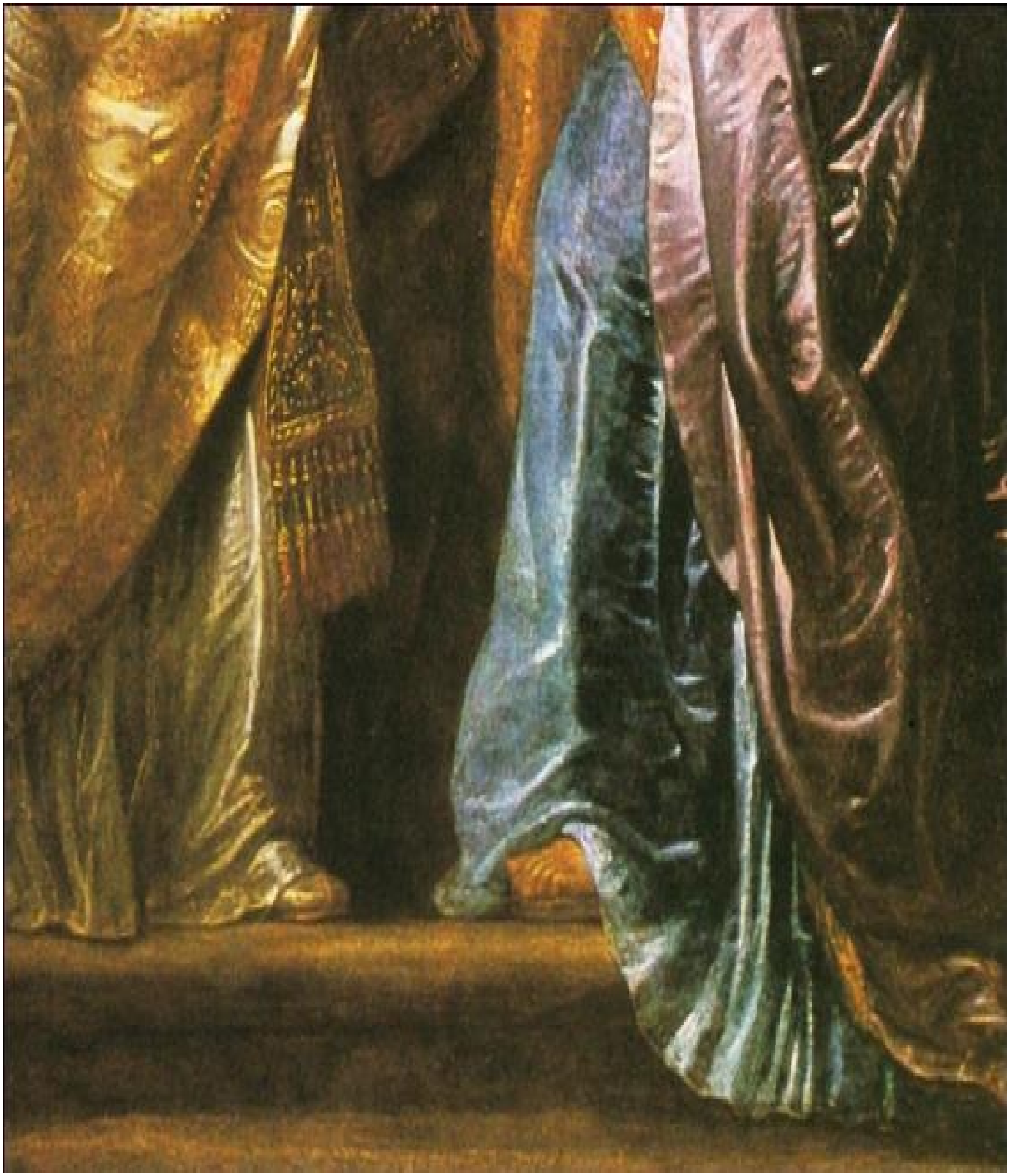

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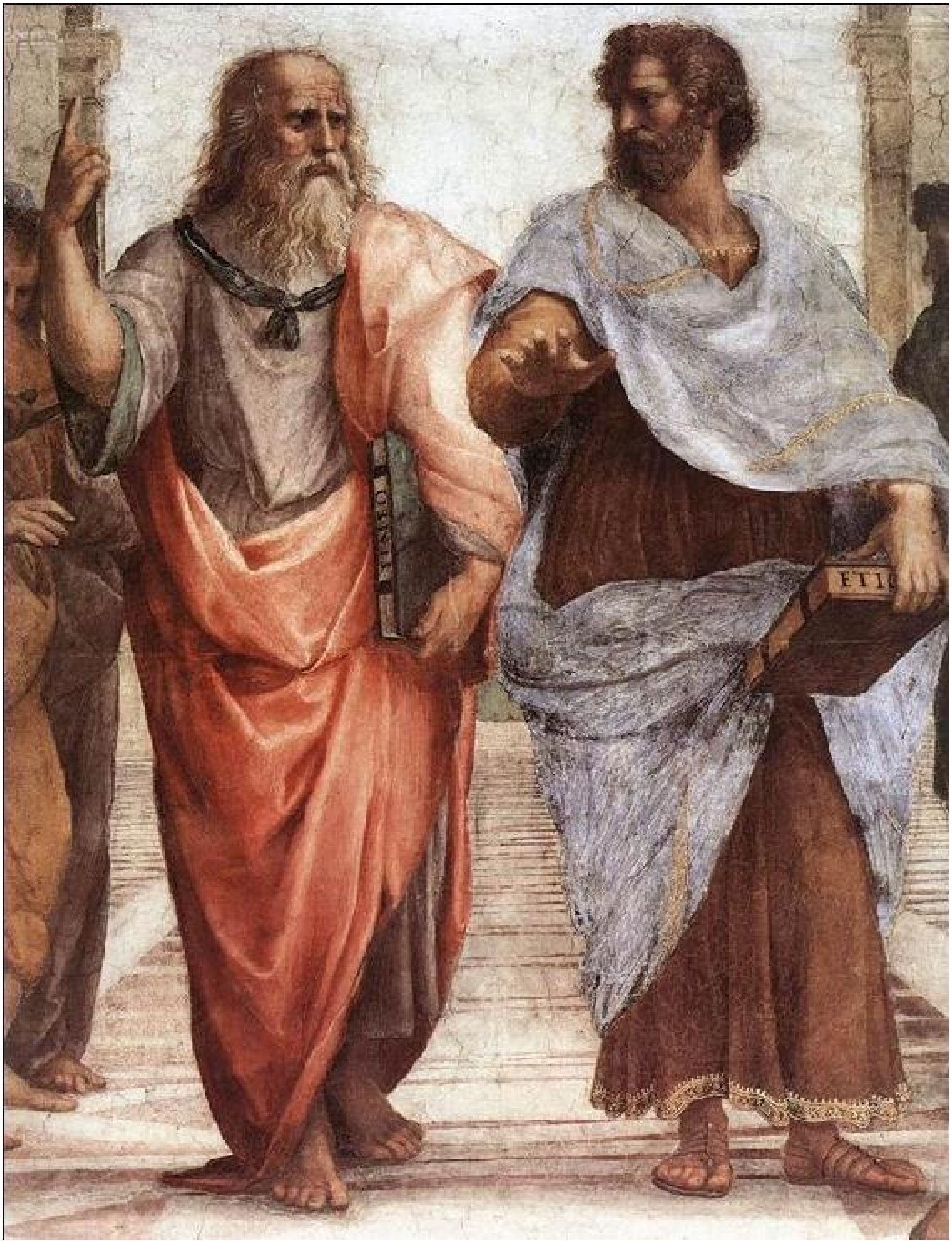


Detail of Raphael's 'The School of Athens', 1509–1511, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City — the right hand figure is the philosopher Aristotle, whose pose and foreshortened hand reoccur in Rubens' representation *of St. Gregory*

SAMSON AND DELIAH

Completed in 1609

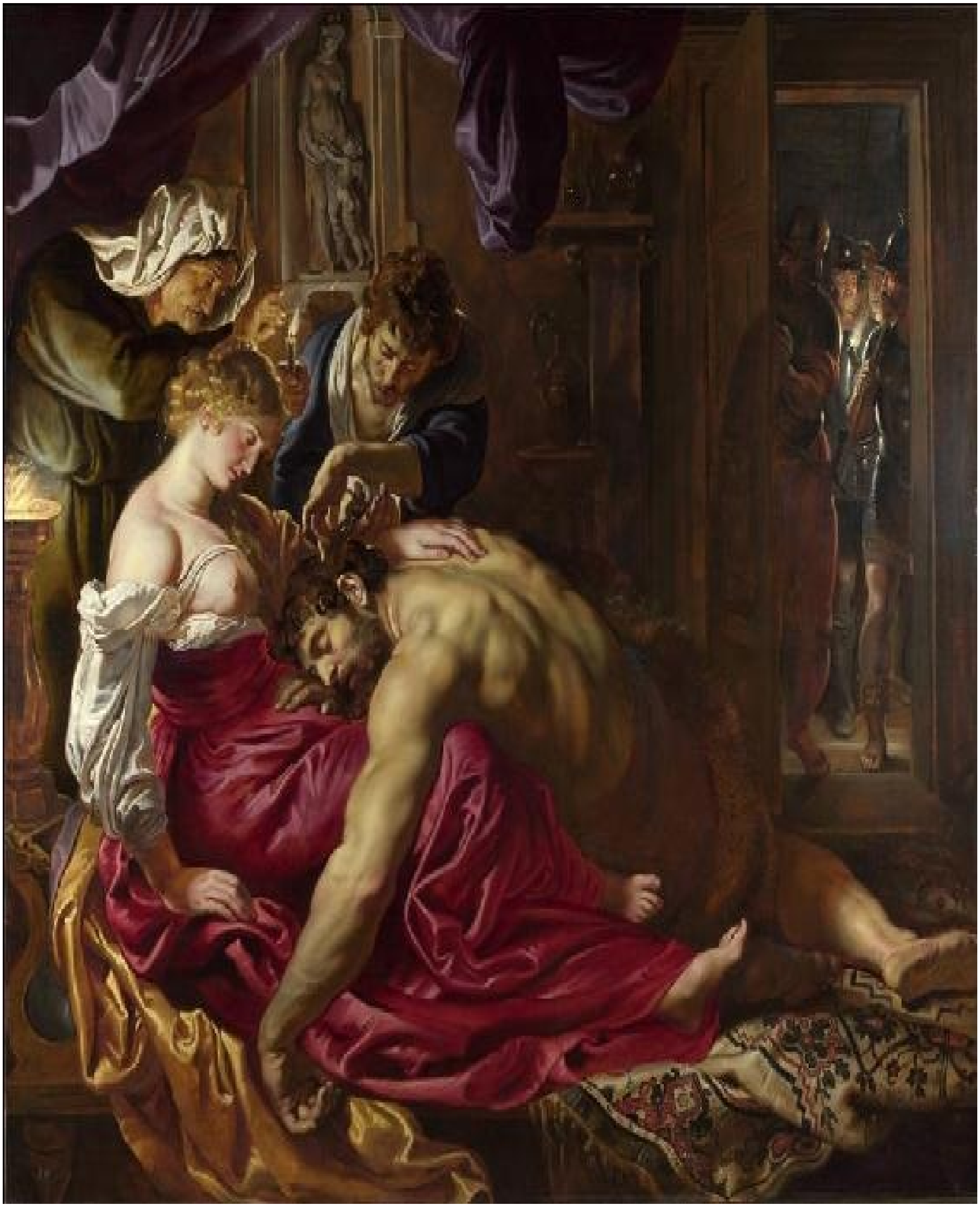
and held in London’s National Gallery, this large canvas was produced for Rubens’ friend and patron, Nicolaas Rockox, a burgomaster of Antwerp, who is reported to have installed the painting in the place of honour in his art gallery, above his fireplace. The source material for the piece is John Milton’s drama *Samson Agonistes*, as well as Handel’s oratorio based on the Samson story, providing ample scope for the artist to demonstrate a full range of sensual and heroic contours.

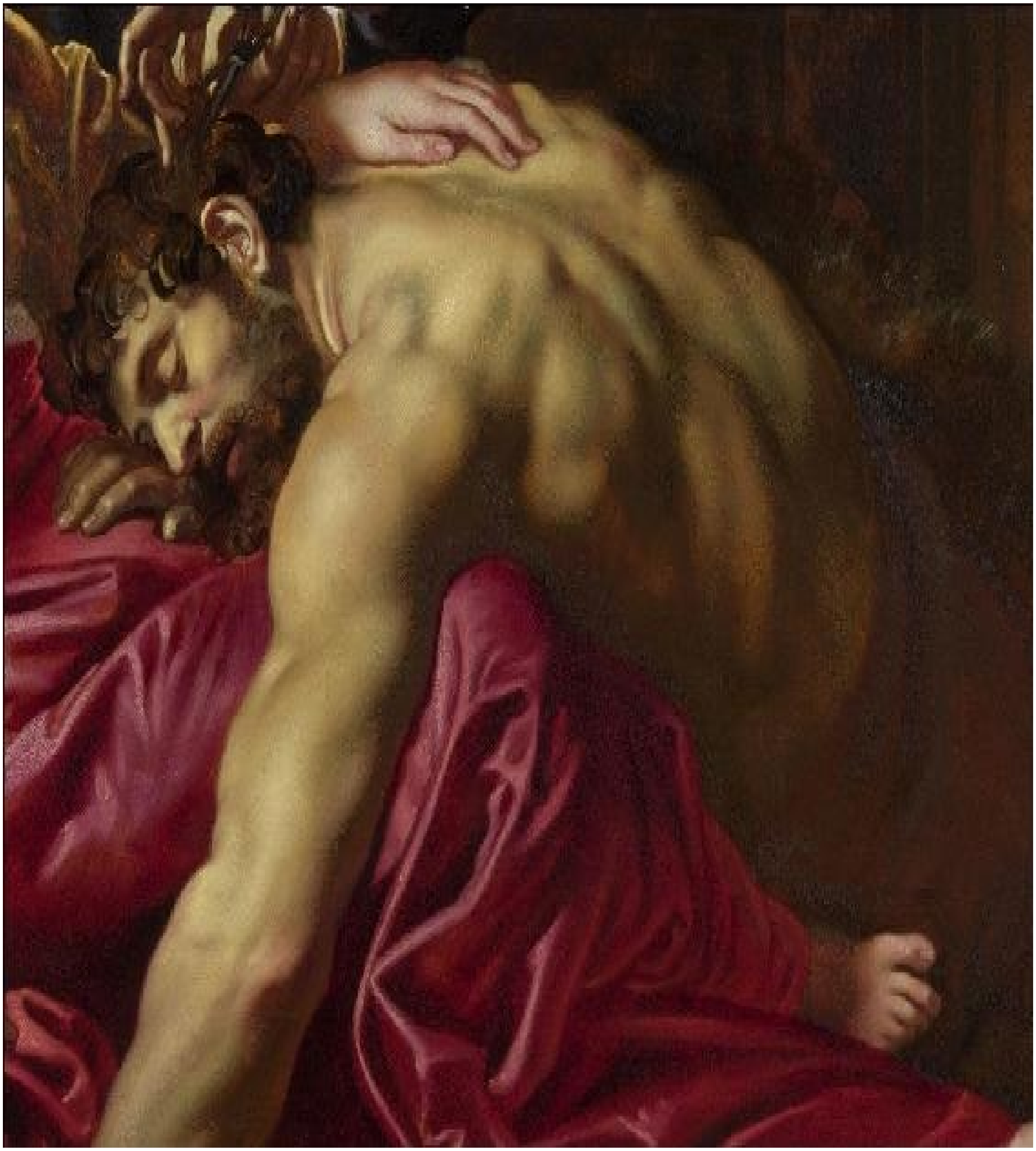
Samson is

depicted as having fallen asleep on Delilah’s knees, after finally giving up the secret of his strength. An old procuress aids Delilah with a candle, in keeping with the Bible’s suggestion that Delilah was a prostitute. She signals for a barber to cut Samson’s hair, therefore weakening the hero, whilst outside a group of Philistine soldiers can be glimpsed, preparing to enter and seize the sleeping hero. Rubens’ use of chiaroscuro demonstrates his familiarity with the works of Caravaggio, whose ground-breaking art he had encountered during his visit to Rome. Rubens utilises multiple light sources to create an imposing display of flesh, delineating the drama with great dexterity.

Delilah is

presented ambiguously, at first appearing only as a professional prostitute, aided by her procuress and seemingly adept at such subterfuge. However, as her hand tenderly rests on Samson’s back, there is the suggestion of her deep feeling for the man she is betraying. Her unreadable expression is juxtaposed with the background sculpture of Venus and a blindfolded Cupid, hinting that love is only silenced by requirement.





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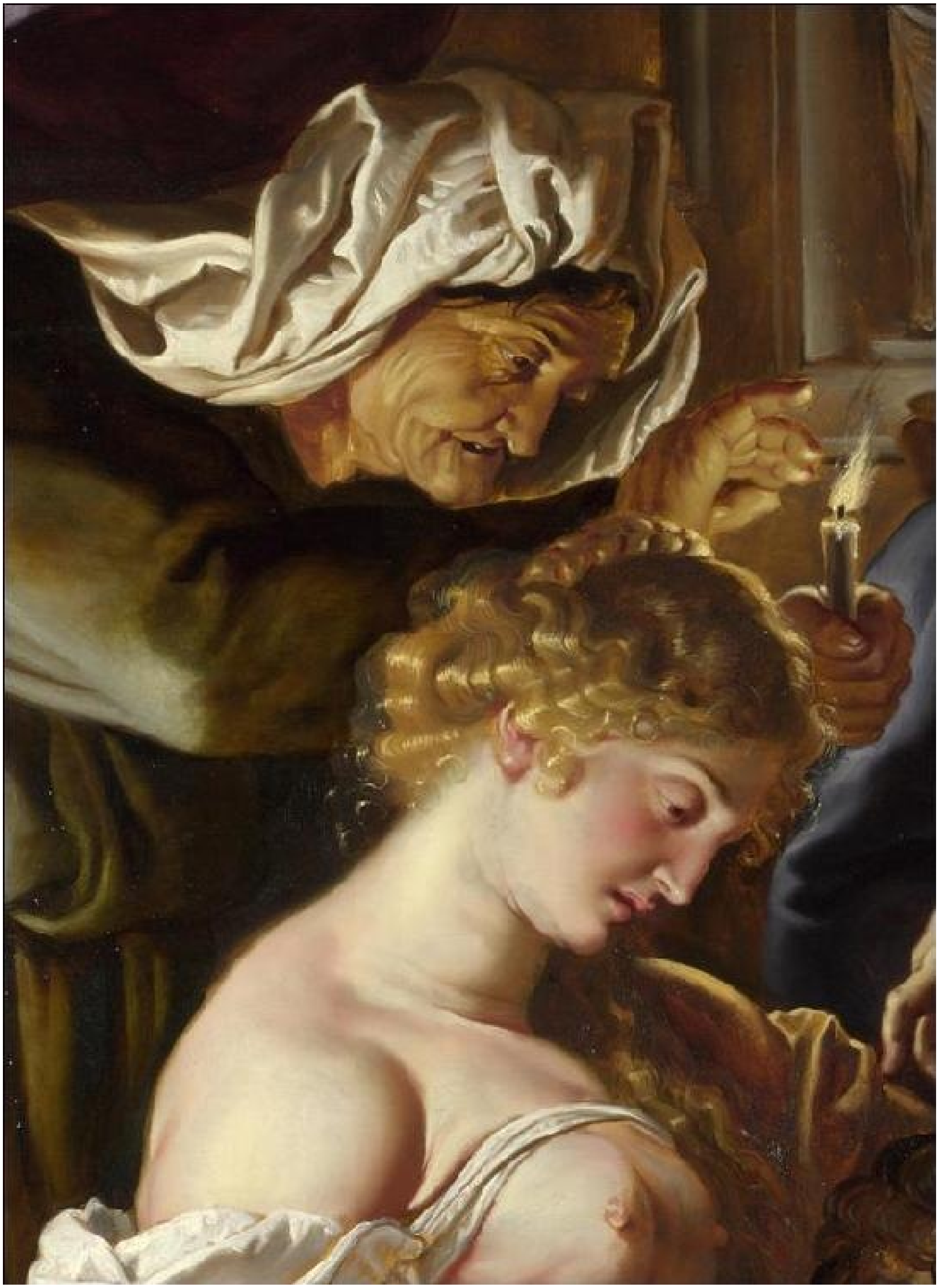

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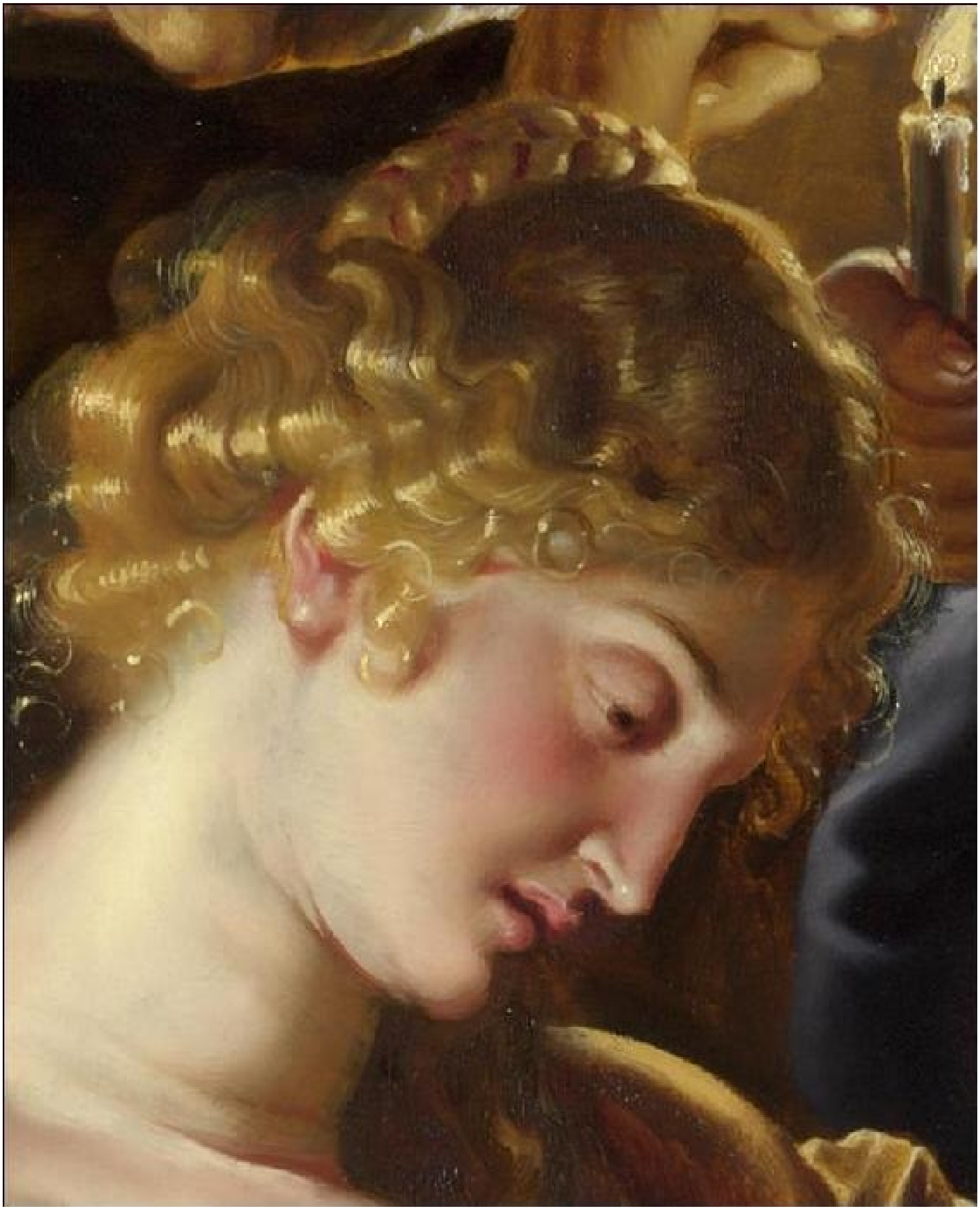

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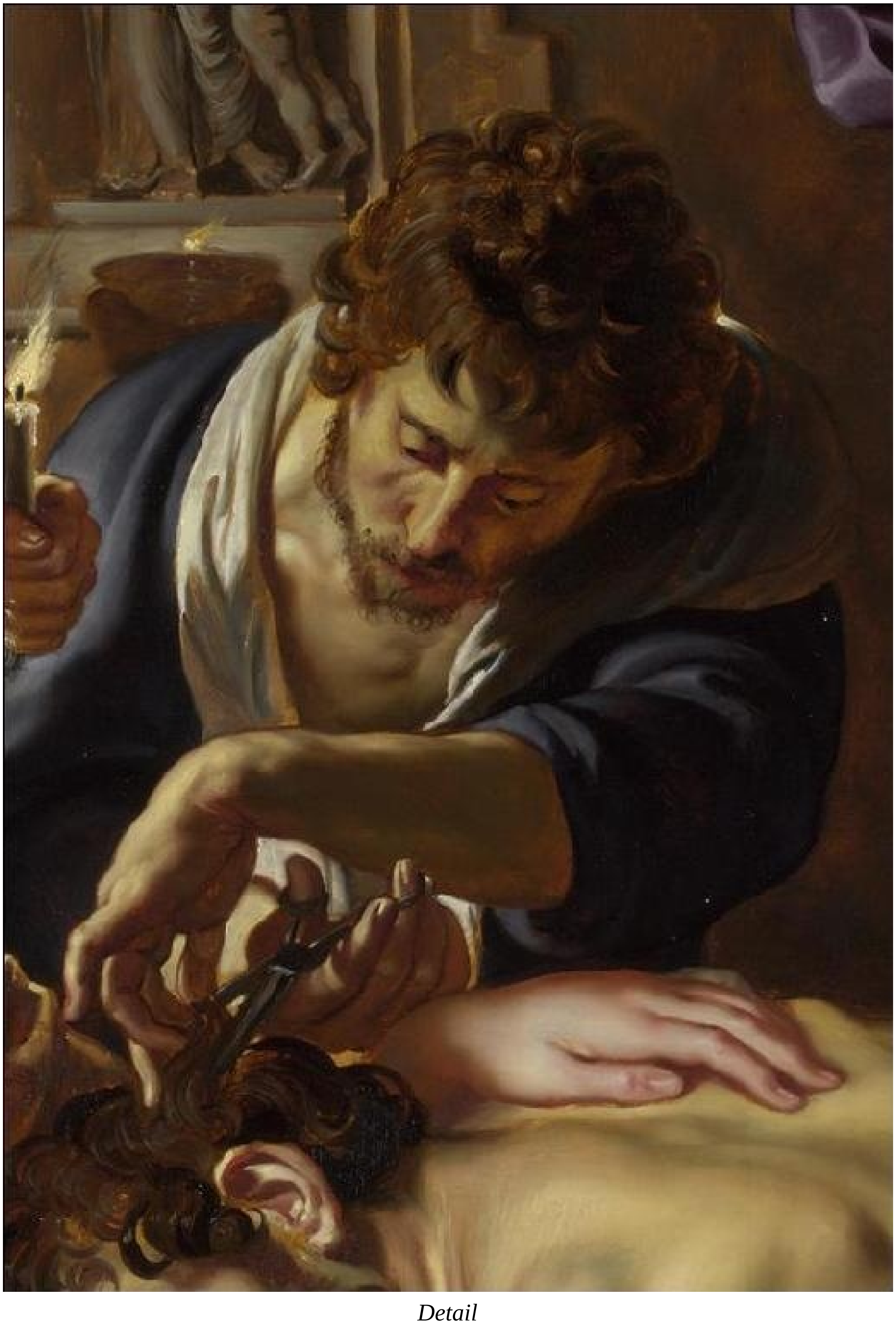

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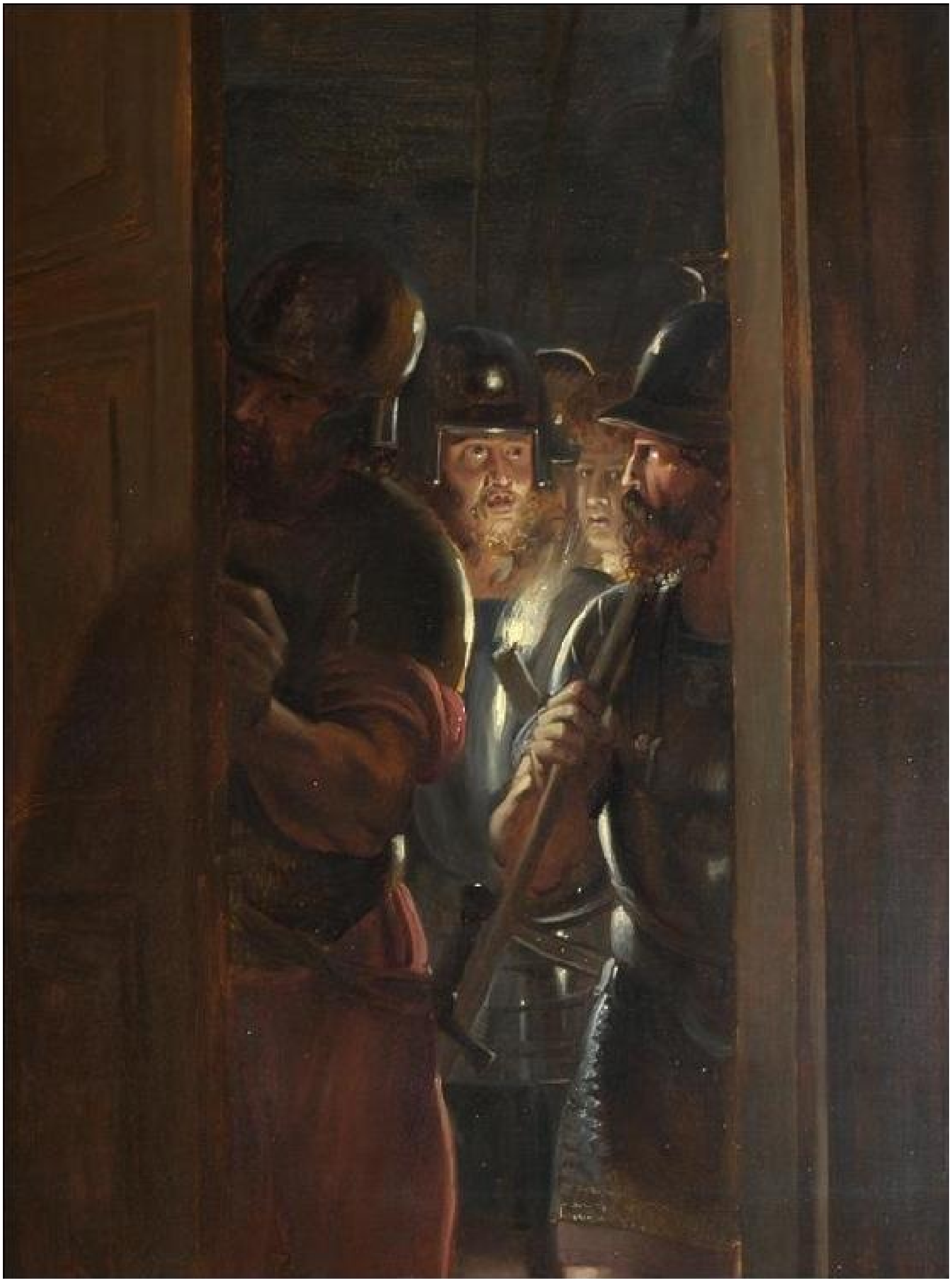

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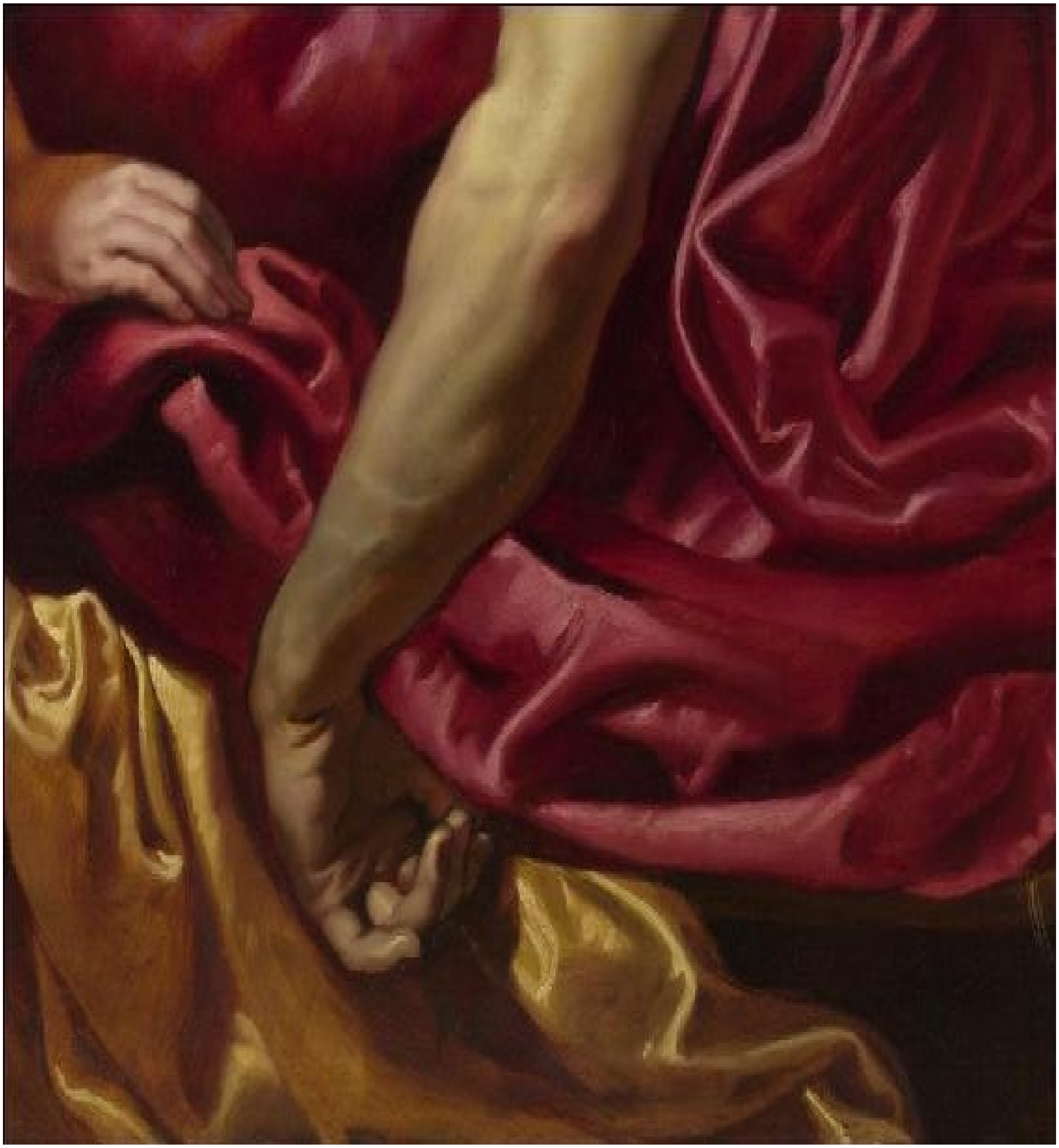

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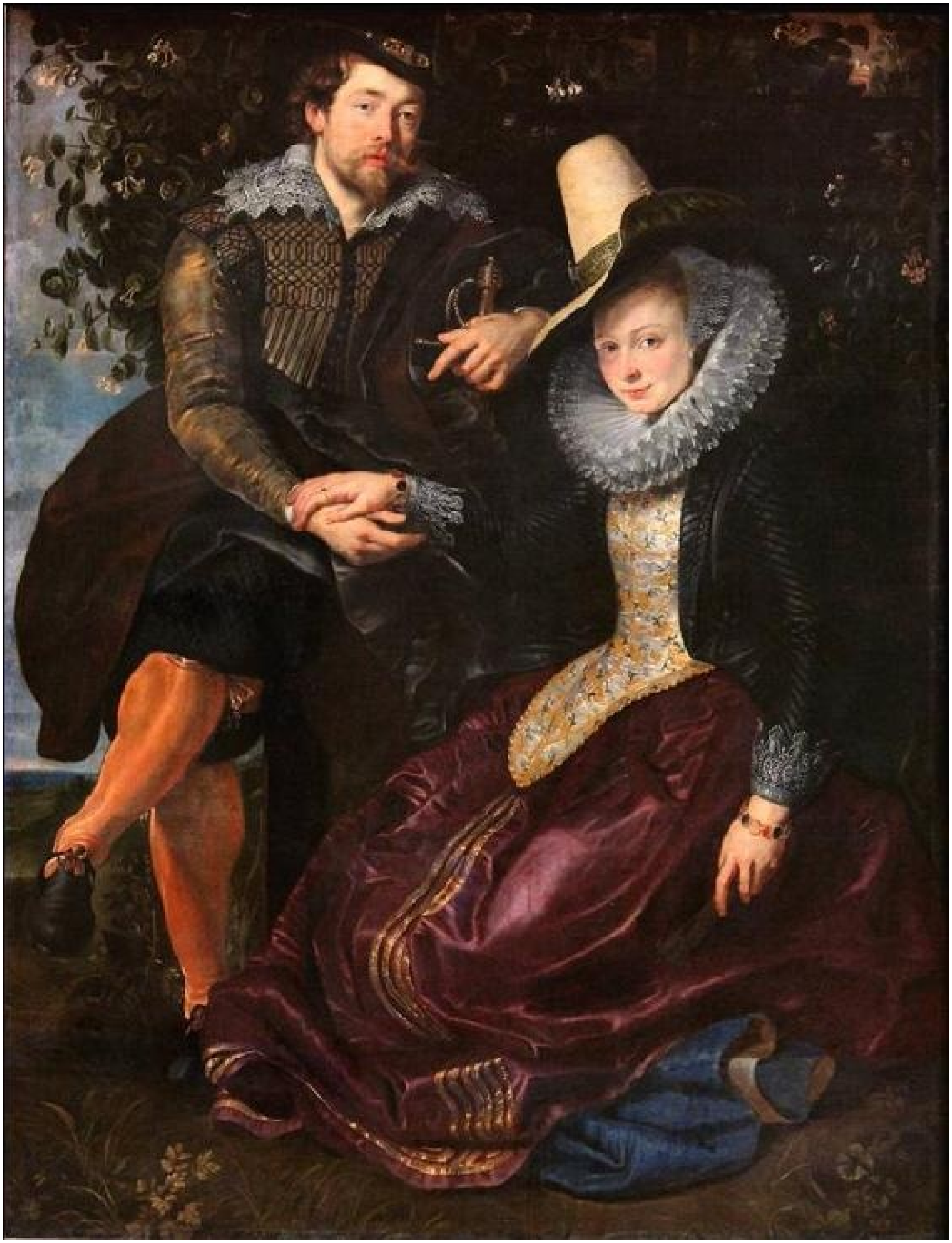
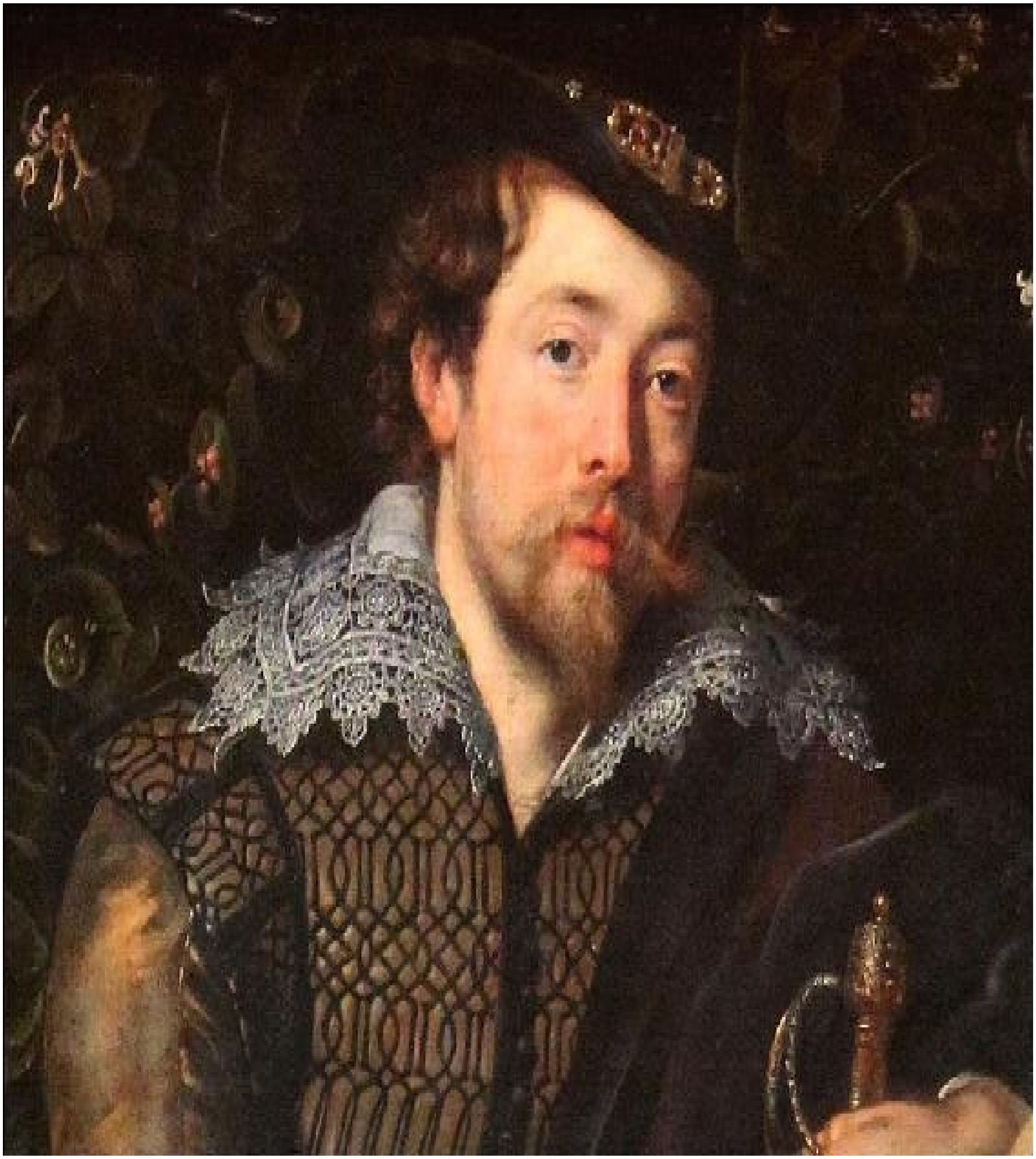
RUBENS AND ISABELLA BRUNT UNDER A HONEYSUCKLE BOWER

On 3 October 1609, Rubens married Isabella Brant, the daughter of a leading Antwerp citizen and humanist, Jan Brant. The following year they moved into a new house and studio that the artist designed himself. Now the Rubenshuis Museum, the Italian-influenced villa in the centre of Antwerp accommodated Rubens' rapidly expanding workshop, where he employed a large number of assistants and apprentices, and also where he stored his personal art collection and library, among the most extensive examples to be found in Antwerp. During this time, he painted the following double portrait of himself and his wife, which is now held in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

The striking couple are symbolically seated before a honeysuckle bower, serving as an emblem of romantic love, while their joined right hands provide a further symbolic image of their marital harmony. Without any sign of his profession, Rubens is presented as a wealthy and prosperous Antwerp gentleman, with his left hand resting on a richly jewelled sword. His wife's gold-trimmed silks and satins blend with the golden tones of the honeysuckle and the evening sun, producing an ethereal charm to the composition.





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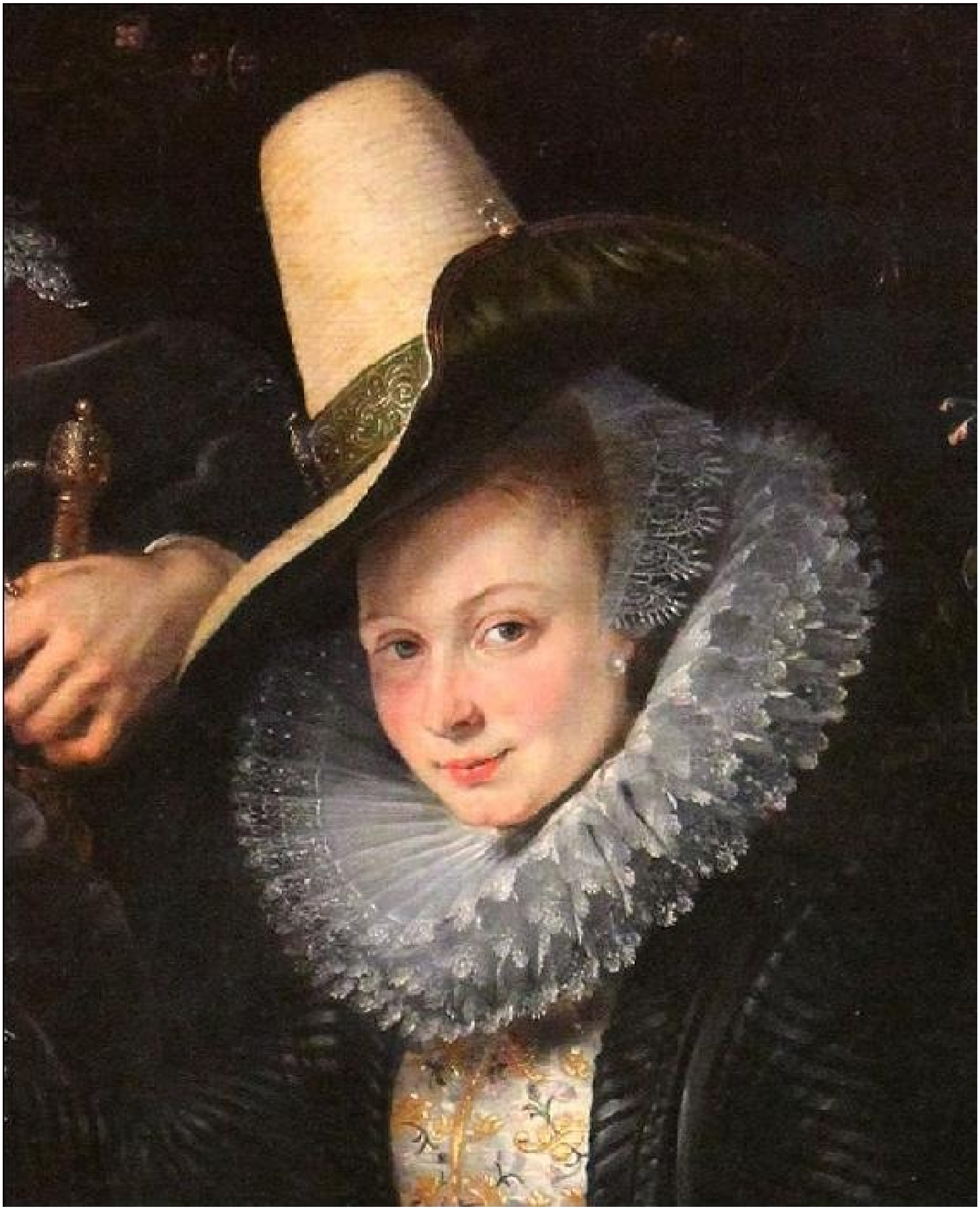

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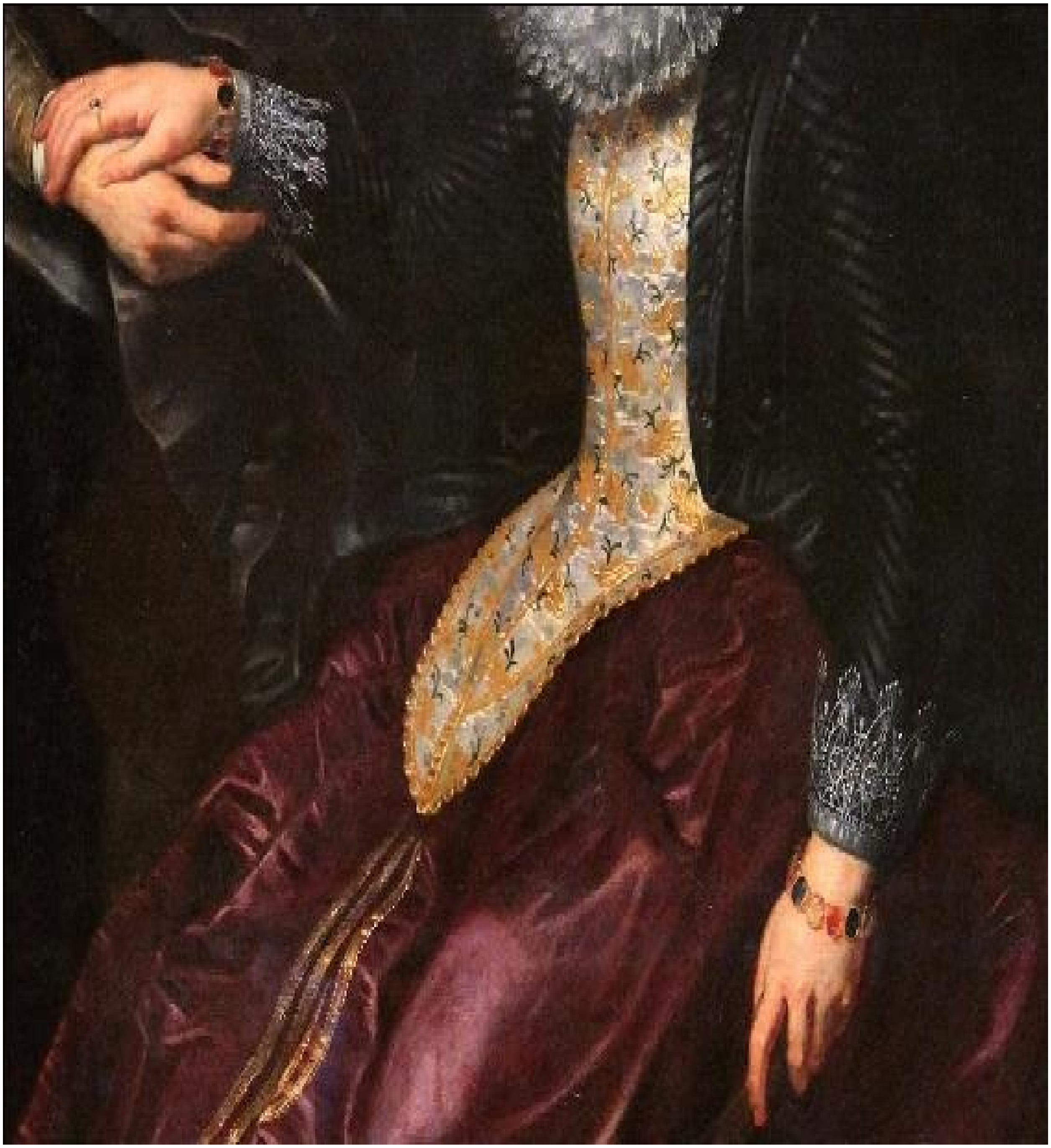

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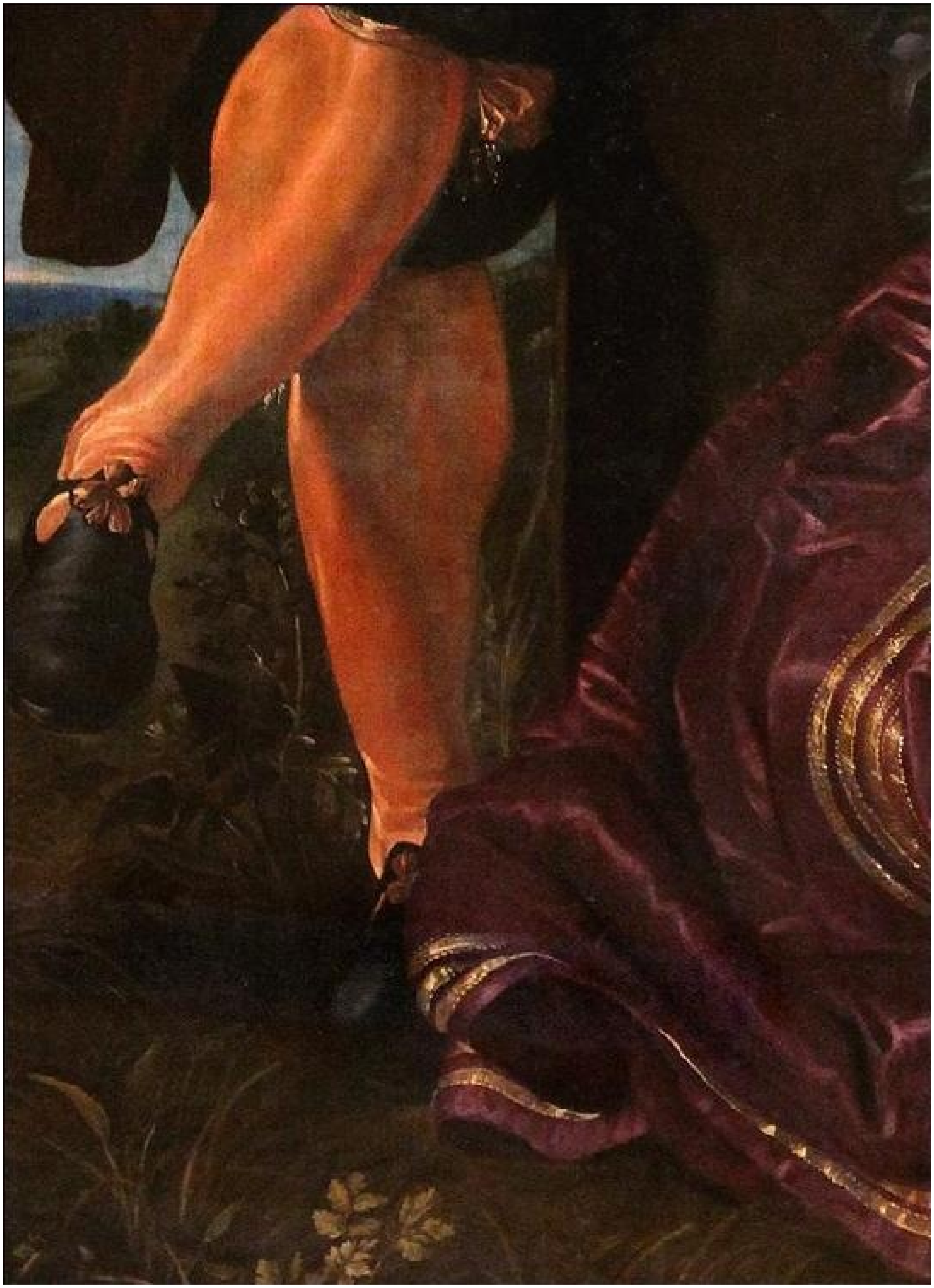

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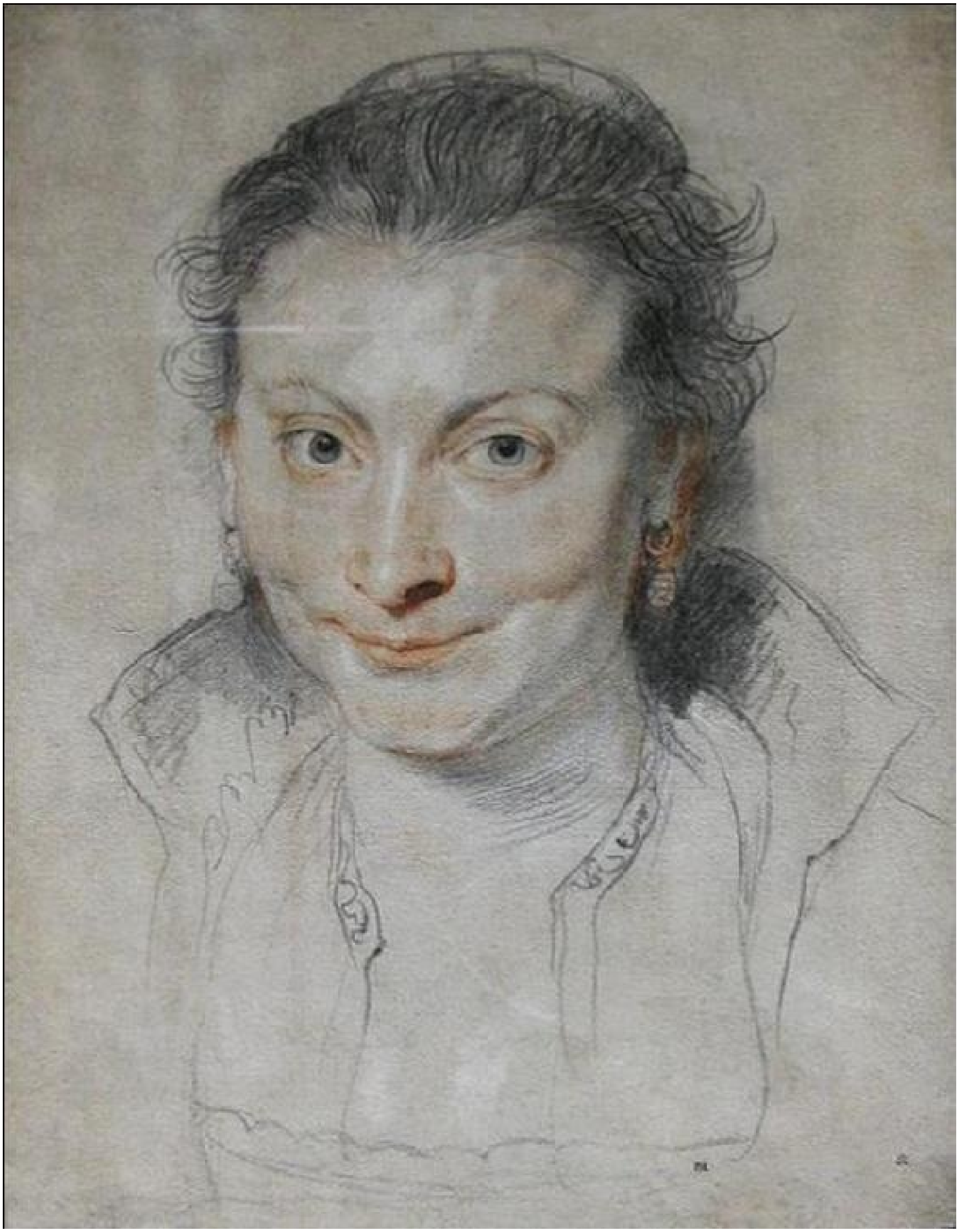


Drawing of Isabella Brant by Rubens

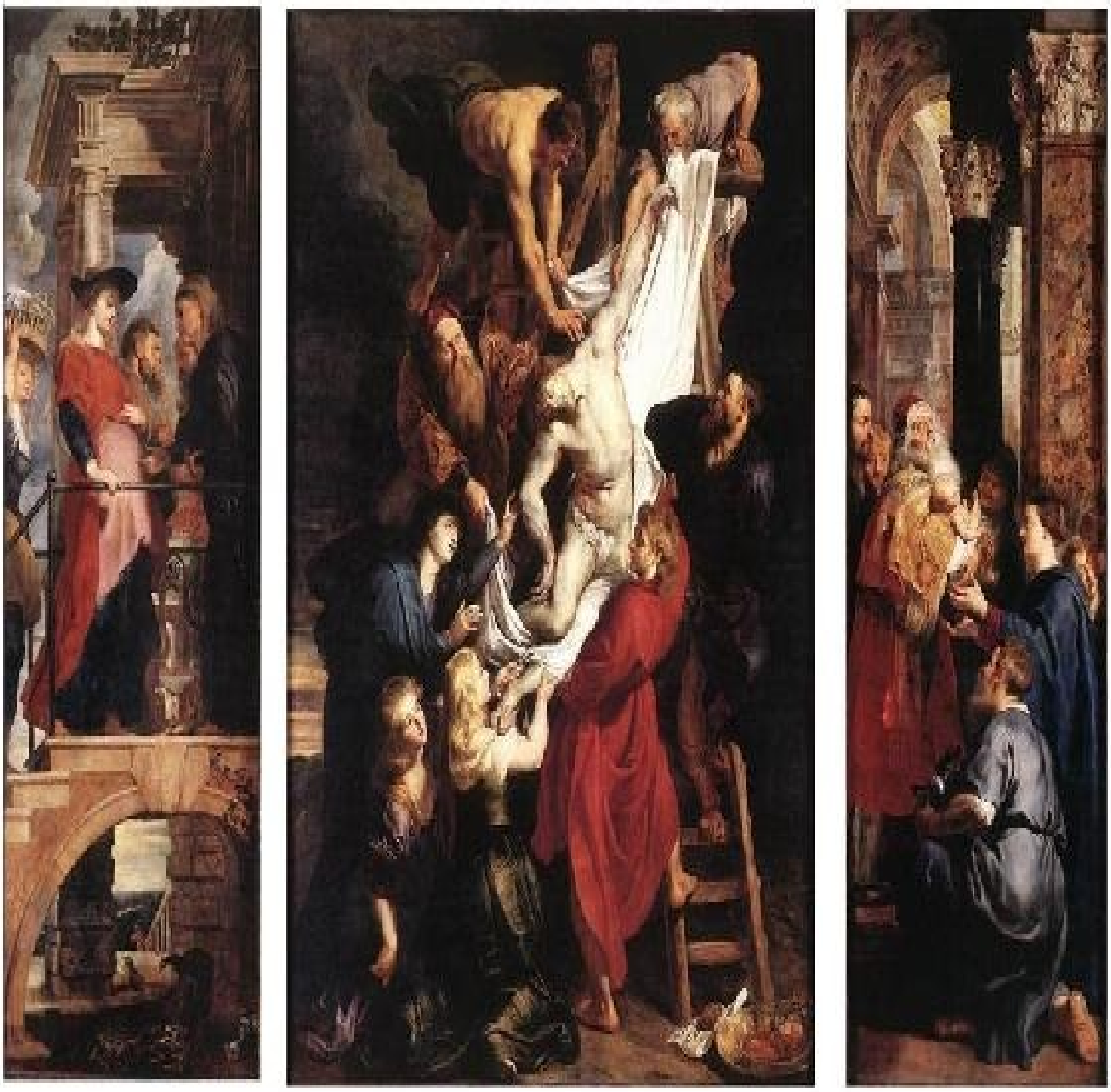
THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

The *Descent from the Cross* or *Deposition of Christ*, is a common scene in Western art, inspired by the Gospels' accounts of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus taking Christ down from the cross after his crucifixion (John 19:38-42). Completed by Rubens in 1614, his own interpretation of the subject forms the central panel of a triptych, now held in the Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp. The *Descent from the Cross* was commissioned in 1611 for the altar of the Harquebusiers, a medieval "Bowmen's Guild" that later formed a charitable fraternity in the cathedral. In his portrayal of the heroic dead body of Christ, Rubens borrowed from the classical group statue of *Laocoön and his Sons*. The torso of the suffering Trojan priest is reversed in Rubens' depiction of Christ, adapting the figure being lowered from the cross by disciples. Standing on the ladder at the right, Nicodemus' figure mirrors Laocoön's elder son, once again stressing the artist's debt to Roman sculpture.

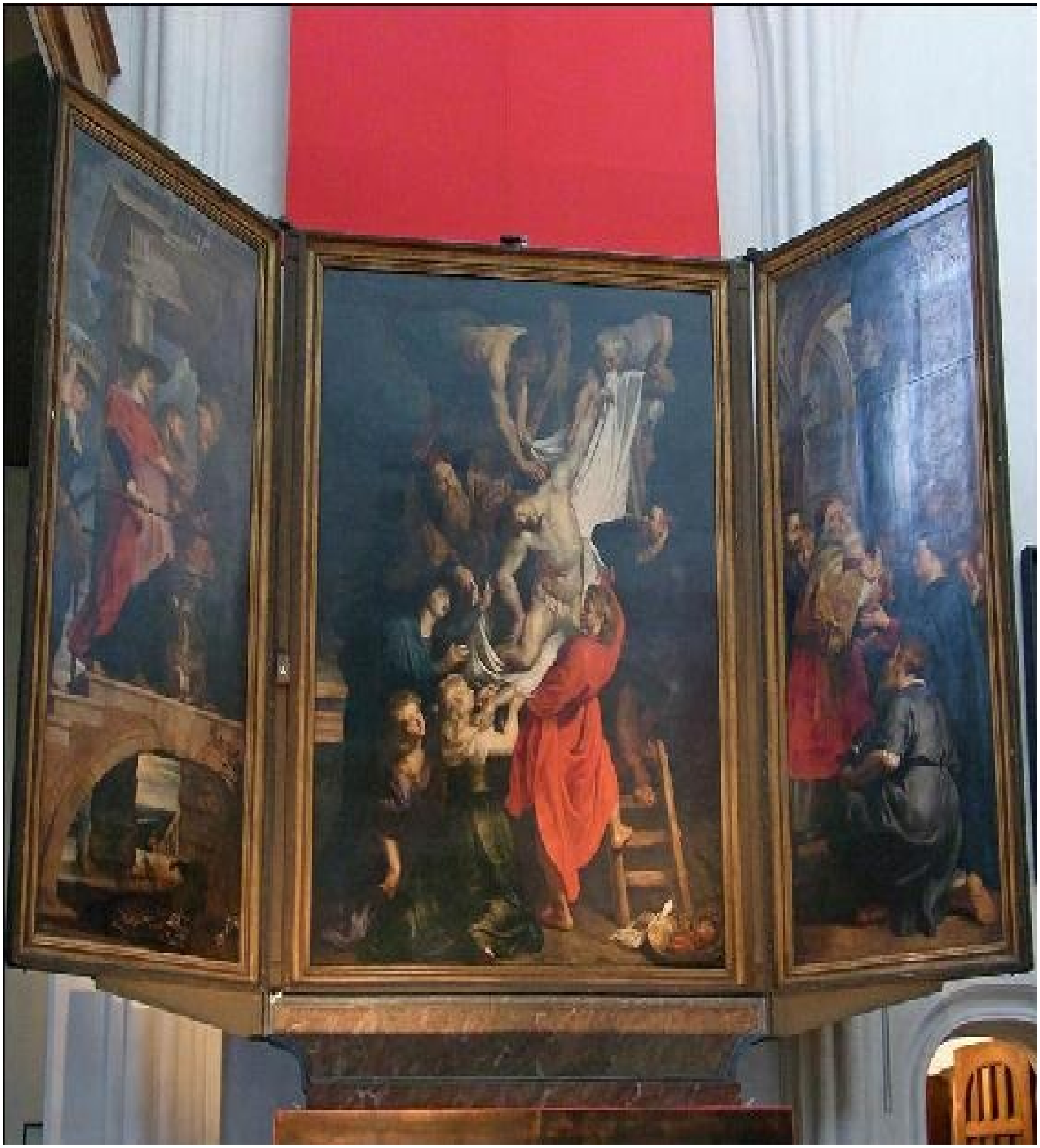
The side panels of the triptych illustrate the *Visitation* on the left and the *Presentation in the Temple* on the right, whilst the outside shutters present the medieval legend of St. Christopher and the Hermit, though these were not completed until after the central panel had been installed two years previously in 1612. The combined iconography celebrates the guild's patron saint, Christopher. Due to his Greek name, Christophoros (Christ bearer), he is portrayed carrying the Christ Child across a river. Each of the three subjects on the inside panels also illustrate the bearing of Christ. The Virgin carries Christ in her womb as she visits her cousin Elizabeth and the high priest Simeon holds the Christ Child as Mary raises her arms to receive him.

When beholding

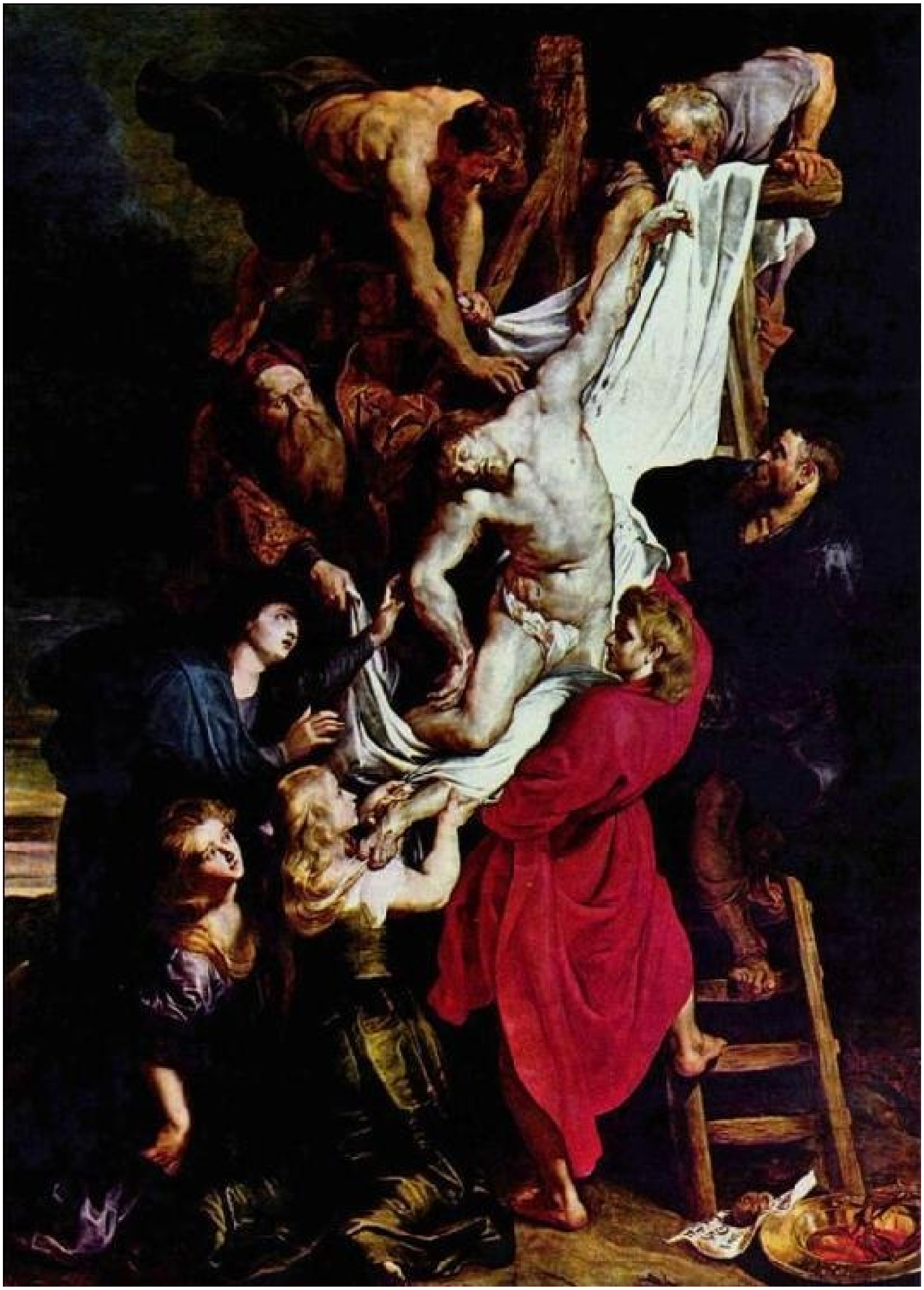
the triptych for the first time in 1781, Sir Joshua Reynolds is reported to have openly declared that Rubens' Christ was "one of the finest figures that ever was invented."



The entire triptych



The triptych in situ



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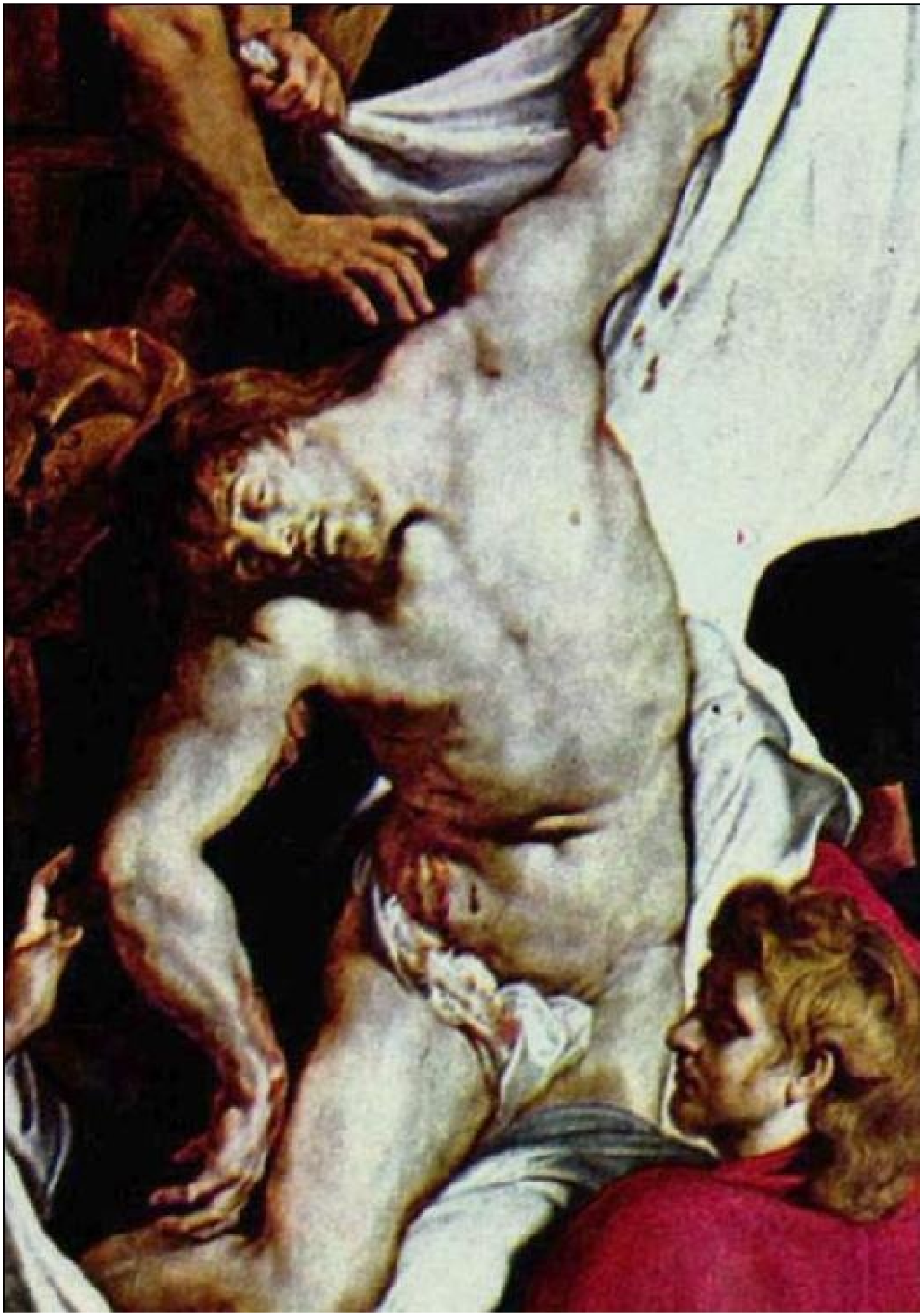

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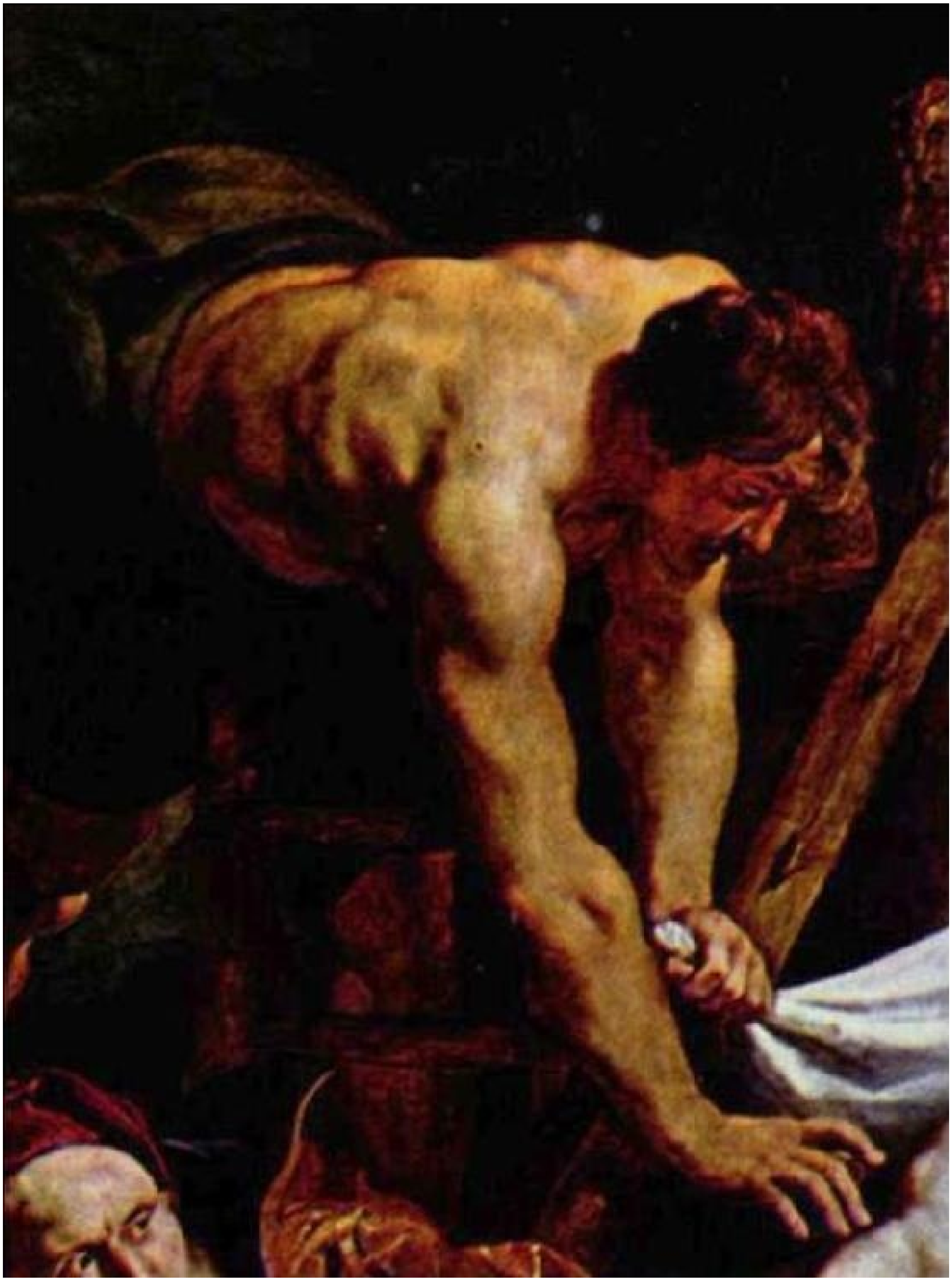

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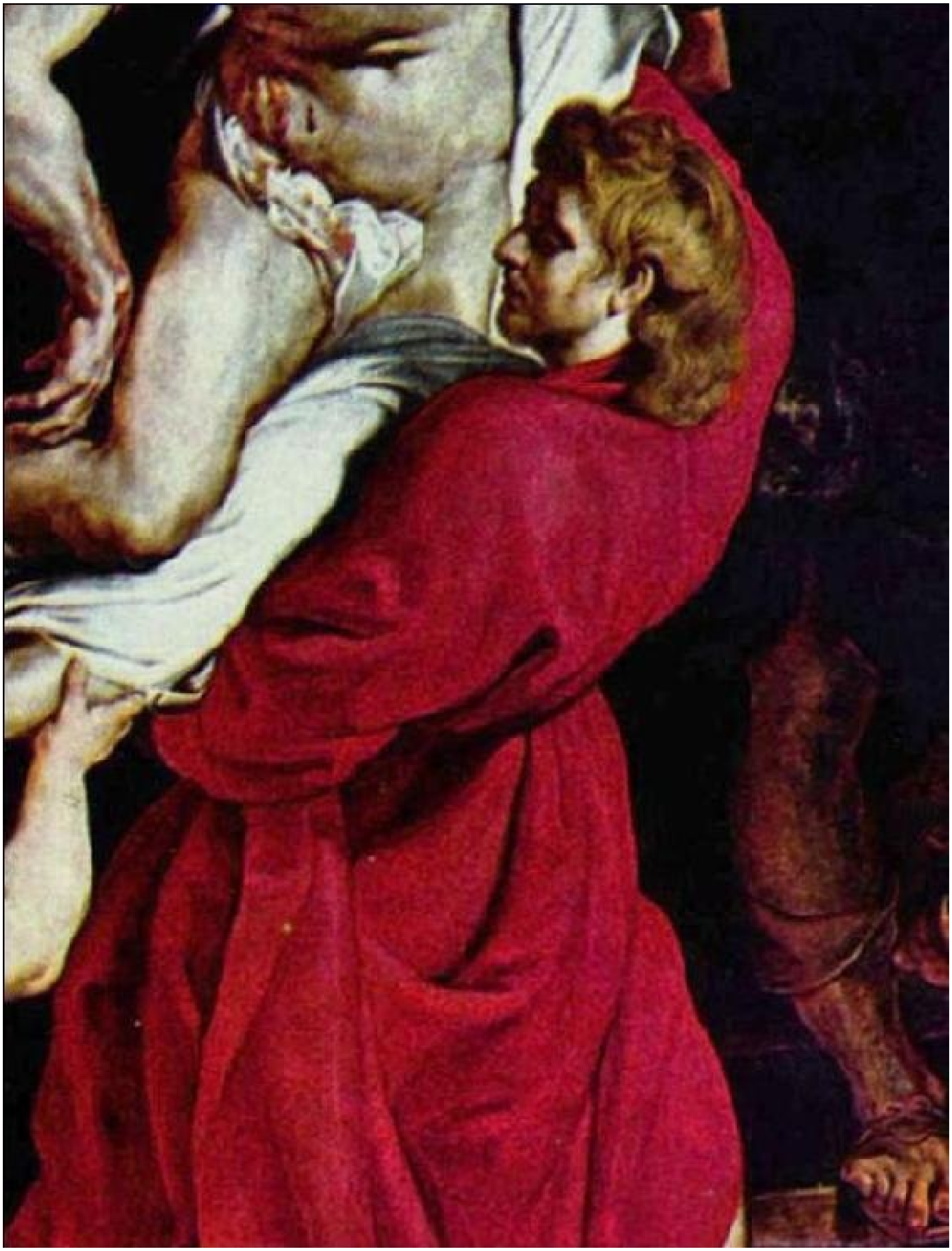

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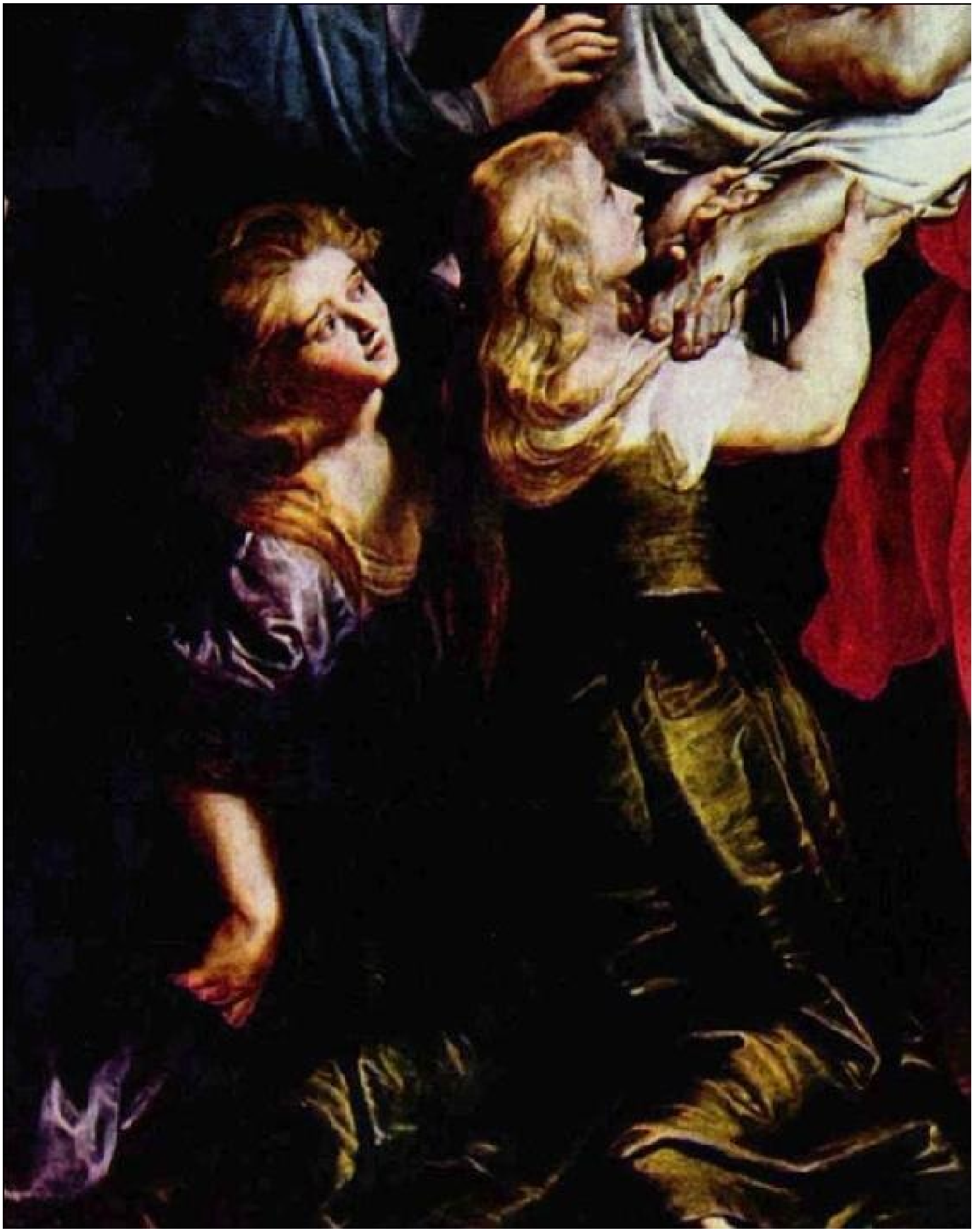

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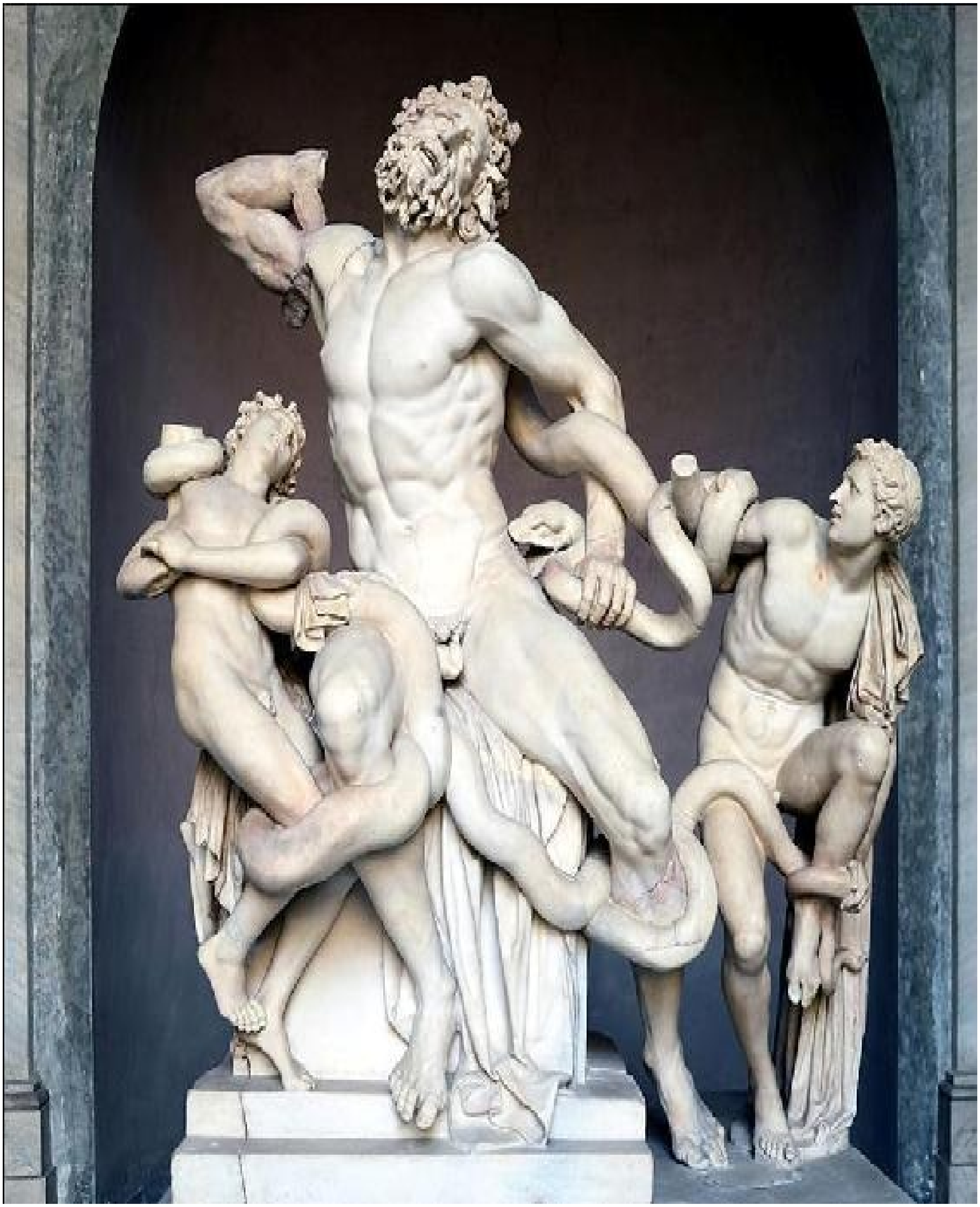
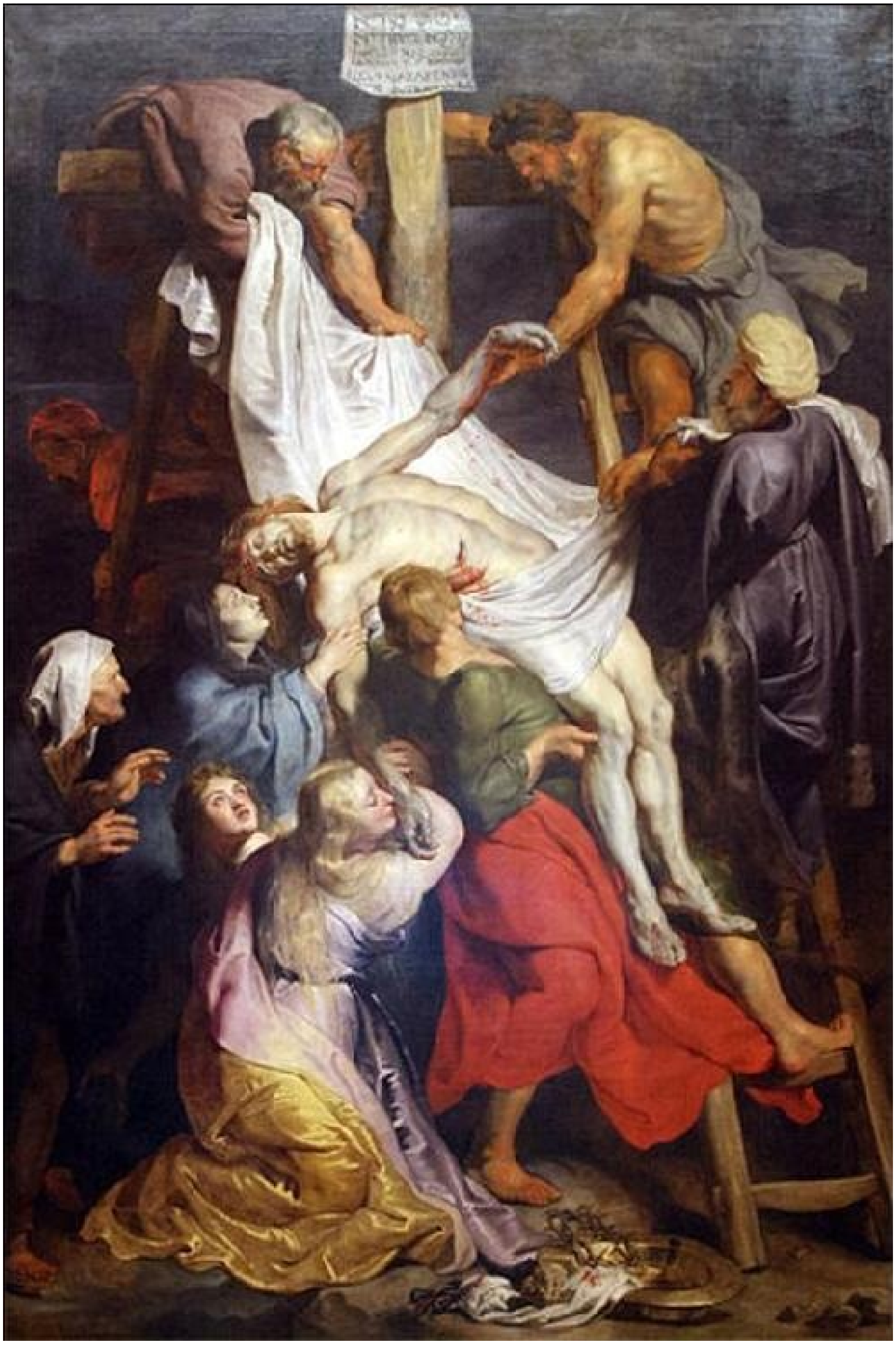
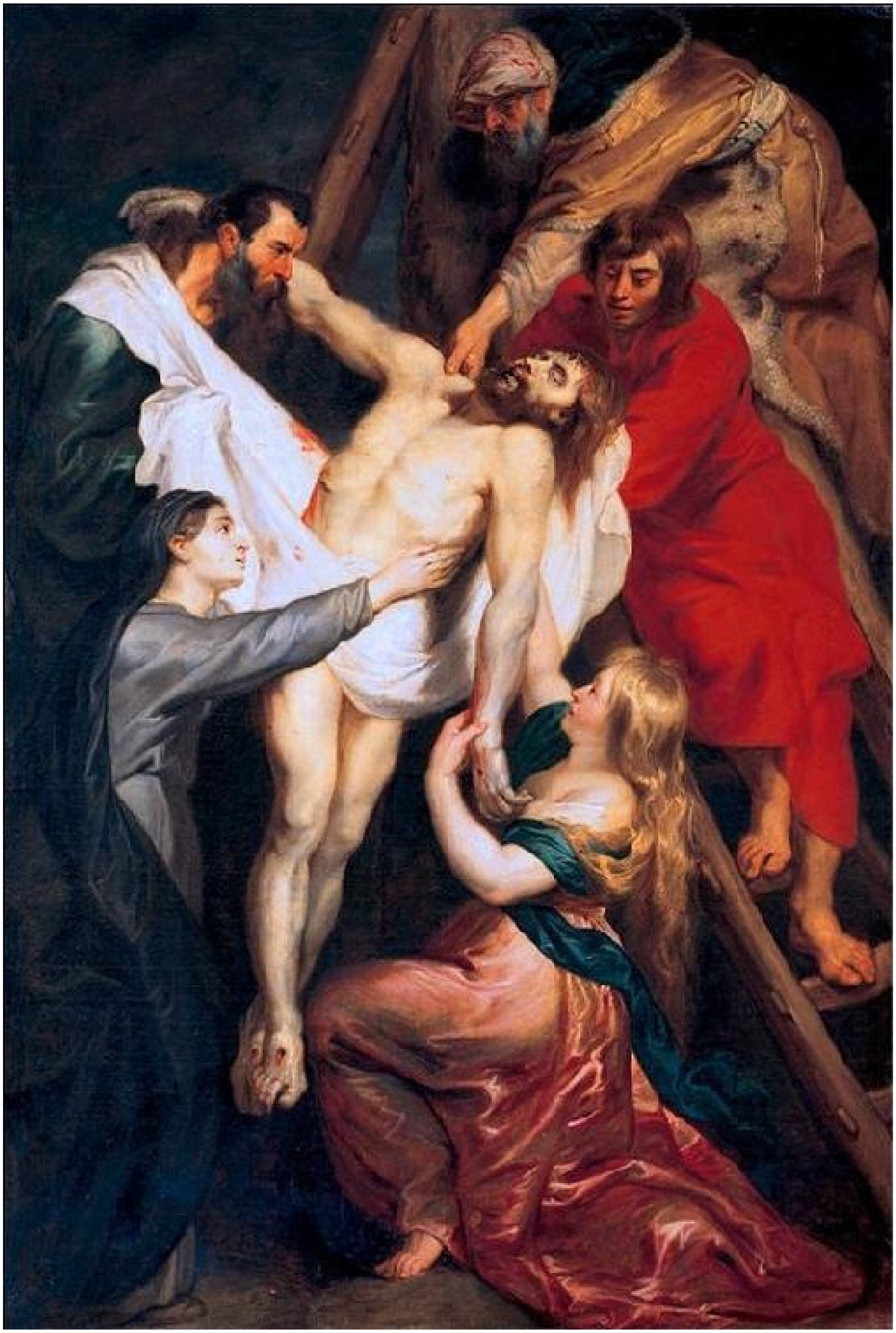


‘Laocoön and his sons’, the famous Laocoön Group is a marble, copy after an Hellenistic original from c. 200 BC. The statue group was found in the Baths of Trajan, 1506 and served as a great source of

inspiration for artists throughout the Renaissance and beyond.



‘The Descent from the Cross’, c.1616, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille



‘The Descent from the Cross’, c. 1618, St. Petersburg, Hermitage

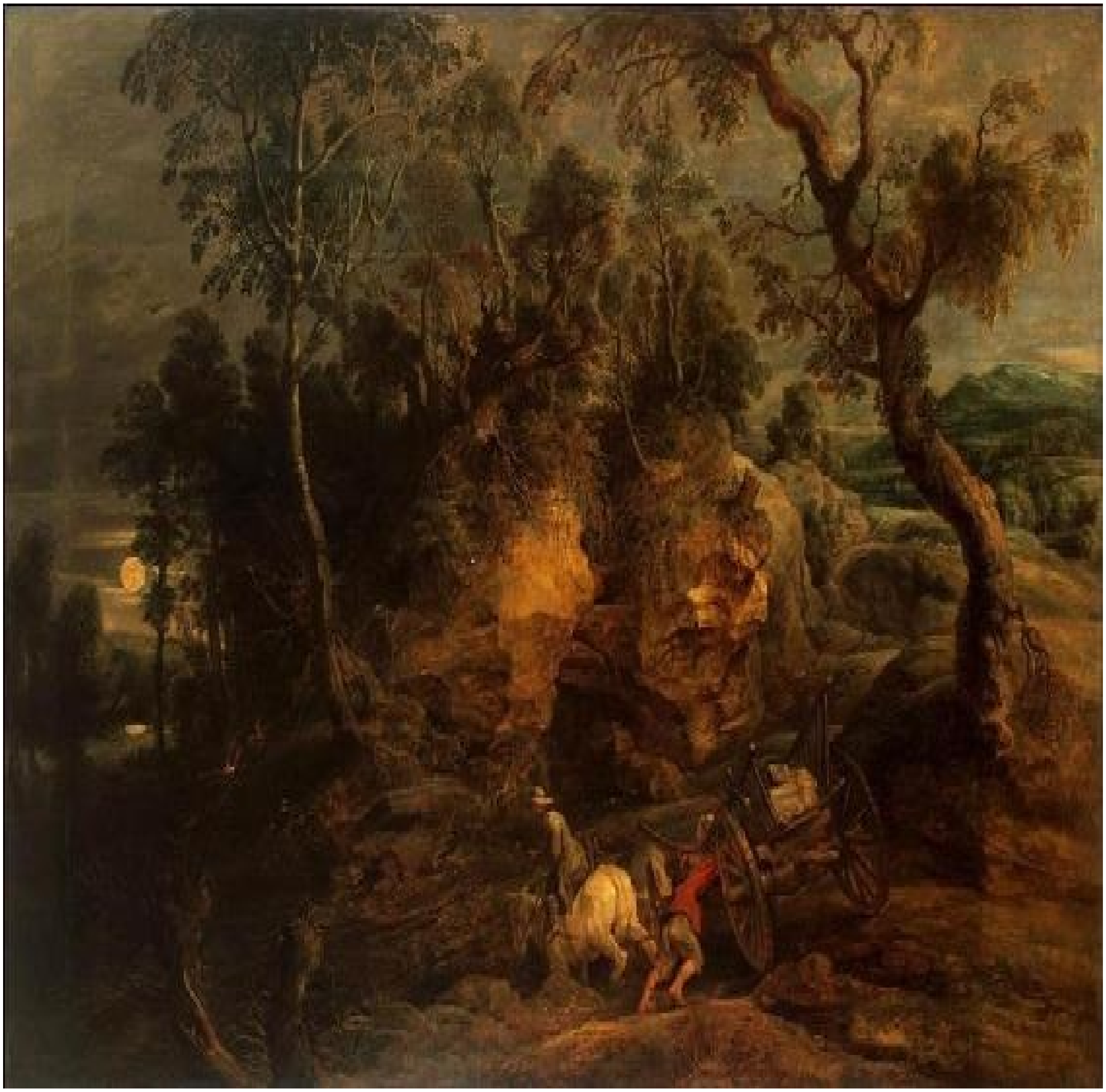
LANDSCAPE WITH CARTERS

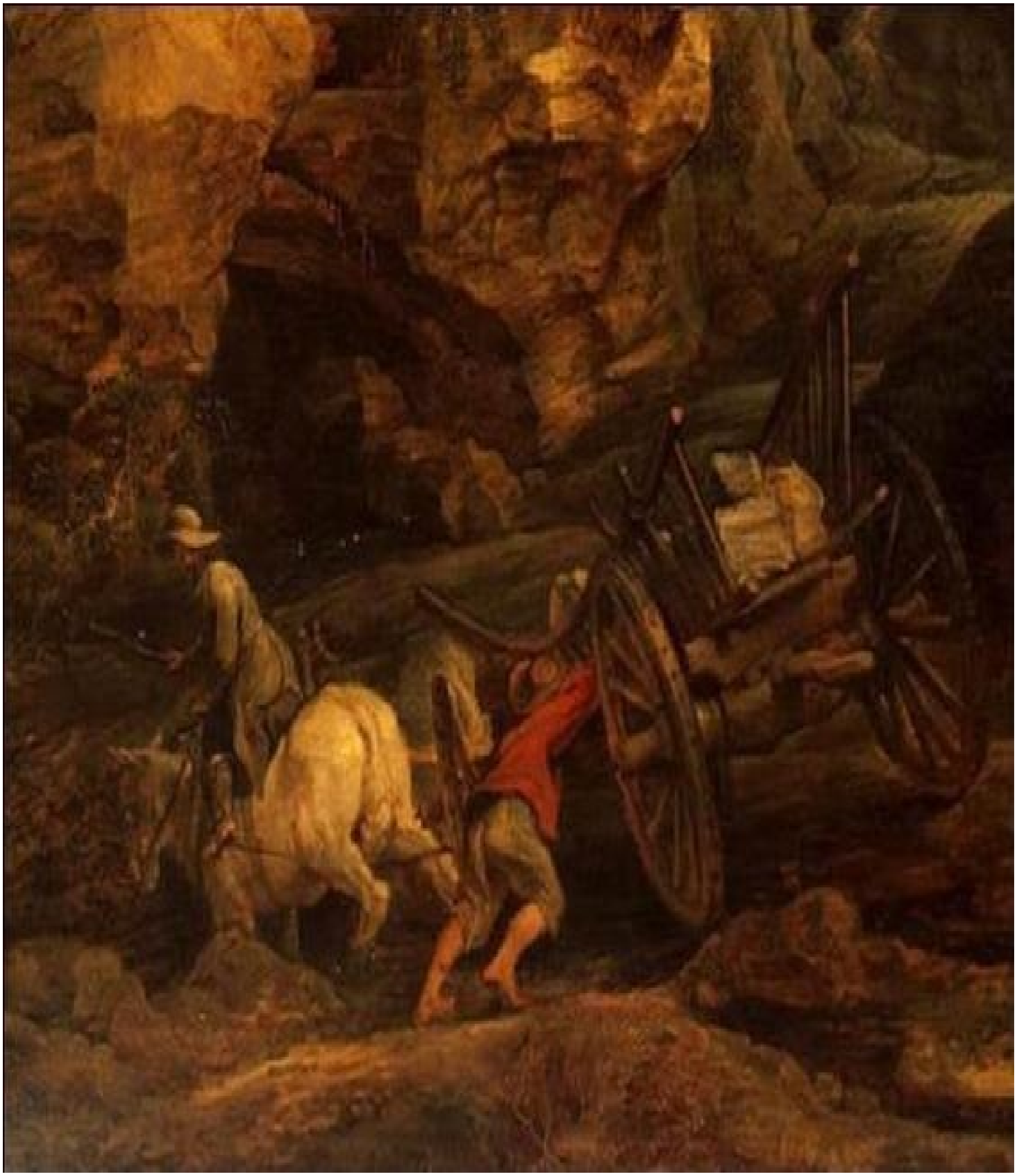
During his

career, Rubens produced over thirty landscapes, though they were never to gain the critical attention that his religious paintings and aristocratic portraits would accrue, with half of them remaining unsold in his estate at the time of his death. He first started painting landscapes in 1616 and they usually featured human figures and implied narratives. *Landscape with Carters* was painted at this time and offers one of the artist’s most evocative creations in the landscape genre, being more a representation of the artist’s imagination than a direct observation of nature.

Painted

entirely in Rubens studio, many years before the development of *en plein air* in art, the painting offers a rich delineation of trees, with gnarled roots, stumps and jagged rocks forming the central subject of the piece, while the carters with their horse drawn wagon are based on life studies. The sun casts a golden tinge over the plains rolling to the far distant mountains, while on the left of the canvas, night has already fallen. A full moon is reflected in the pond, as bats hover above the treetops and two sombre figures can be glimpsed by a campfire. The two Flemish carters are steering a wagonload of hewn rock hazardously down a hill, attempting to ford the stream. The moment of the rustic struggle is captured by how the driver uneasily glances back at his fellow worker, who throws his weight against the wagon, trying to avoid its fall.





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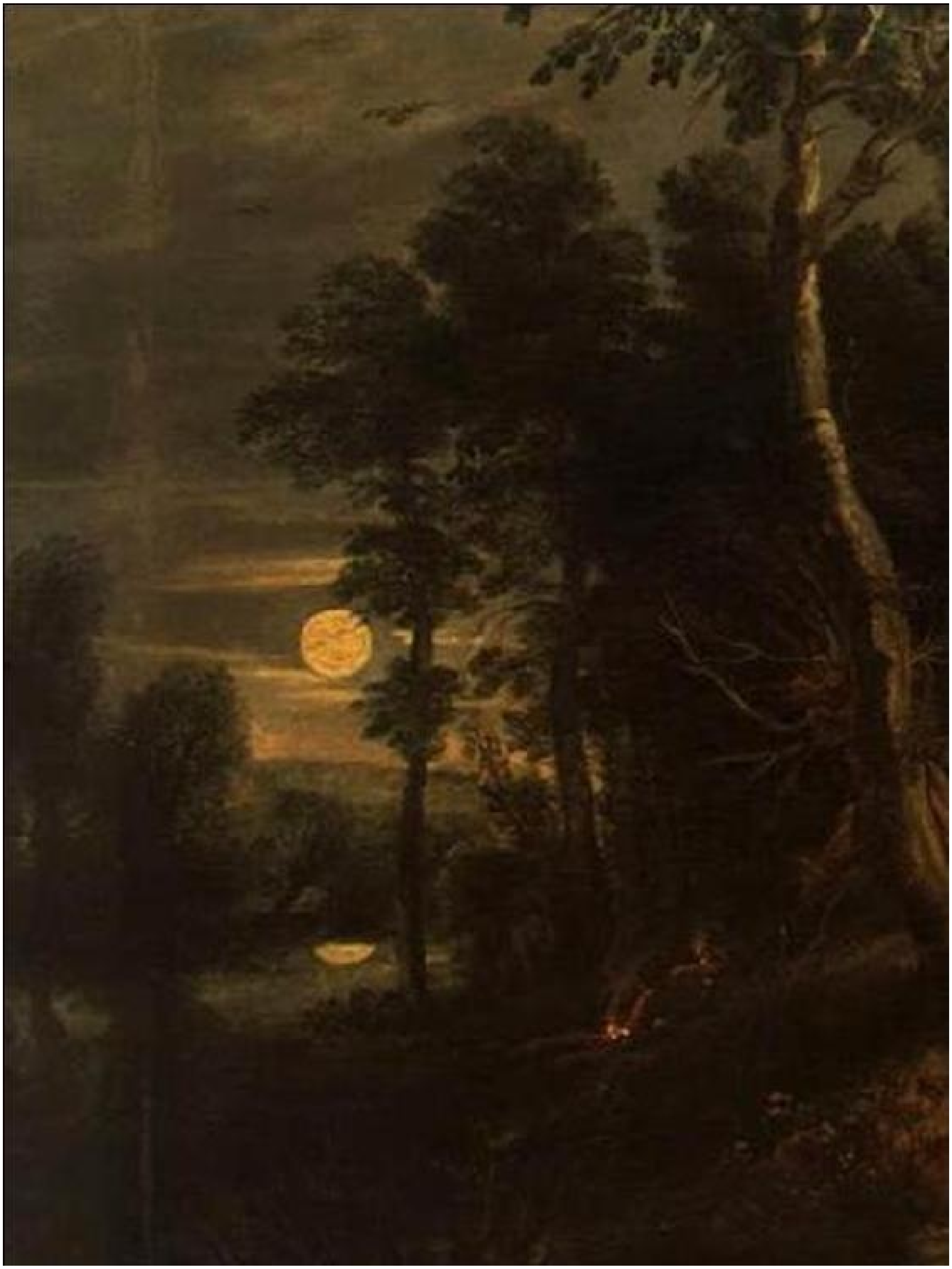

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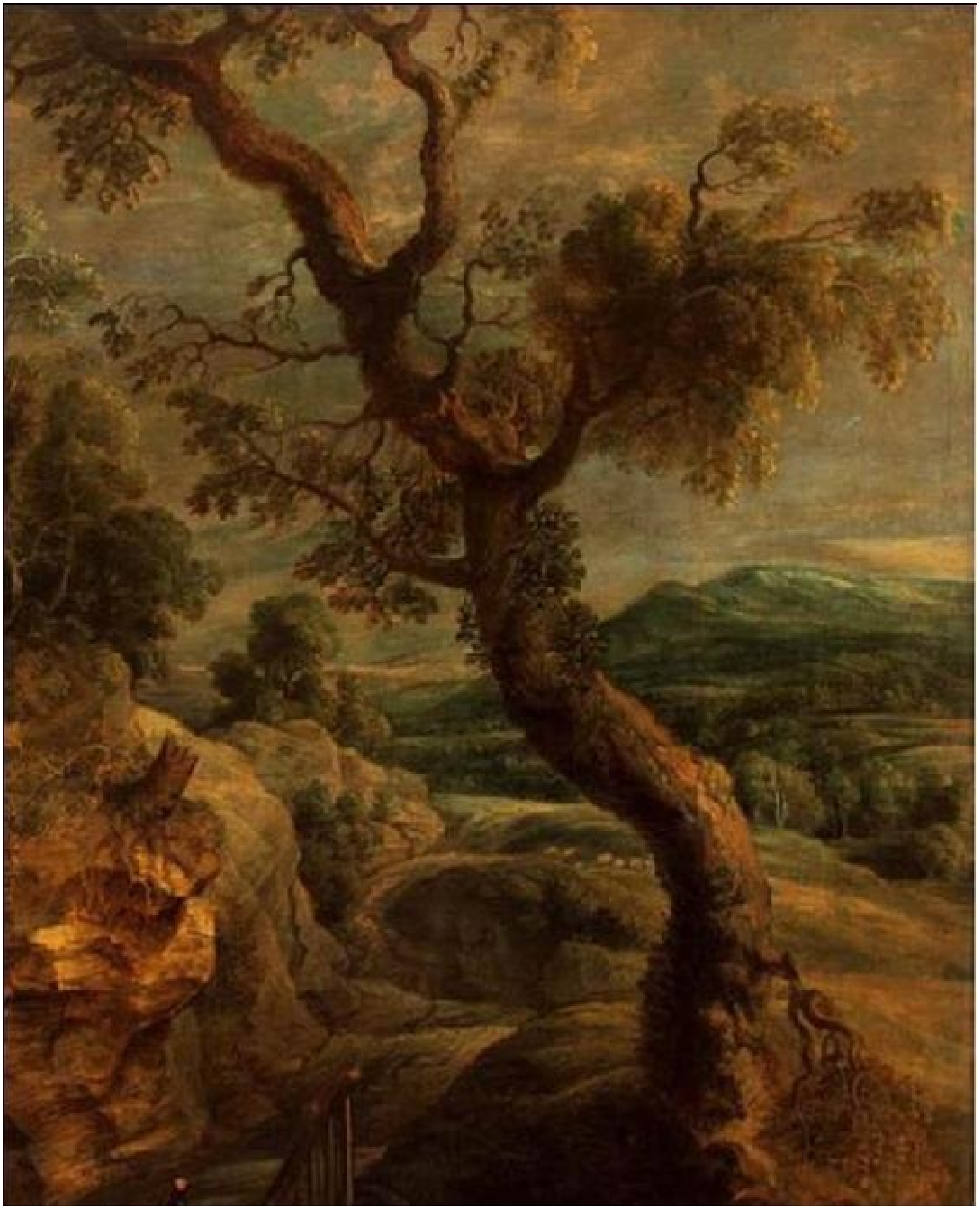

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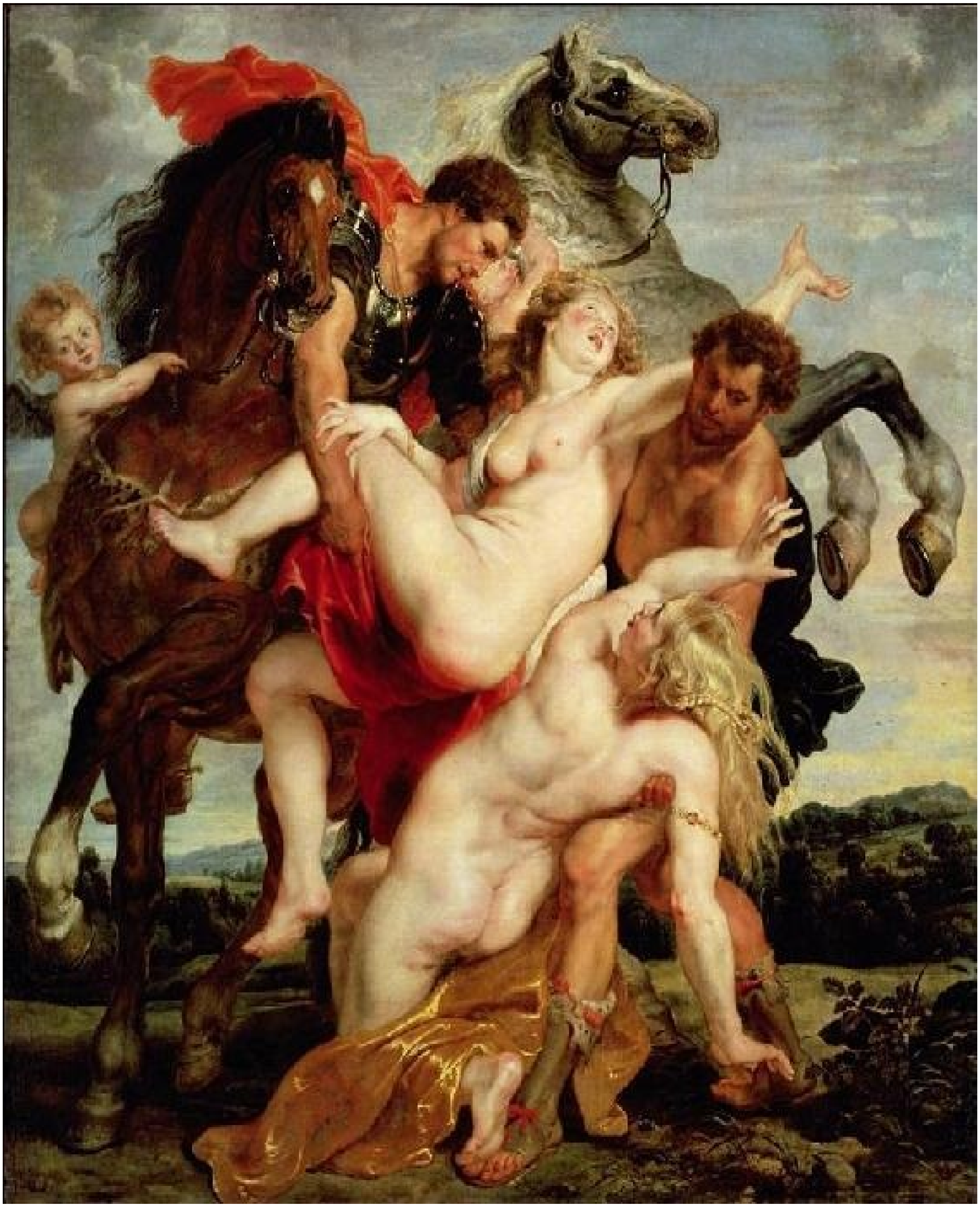
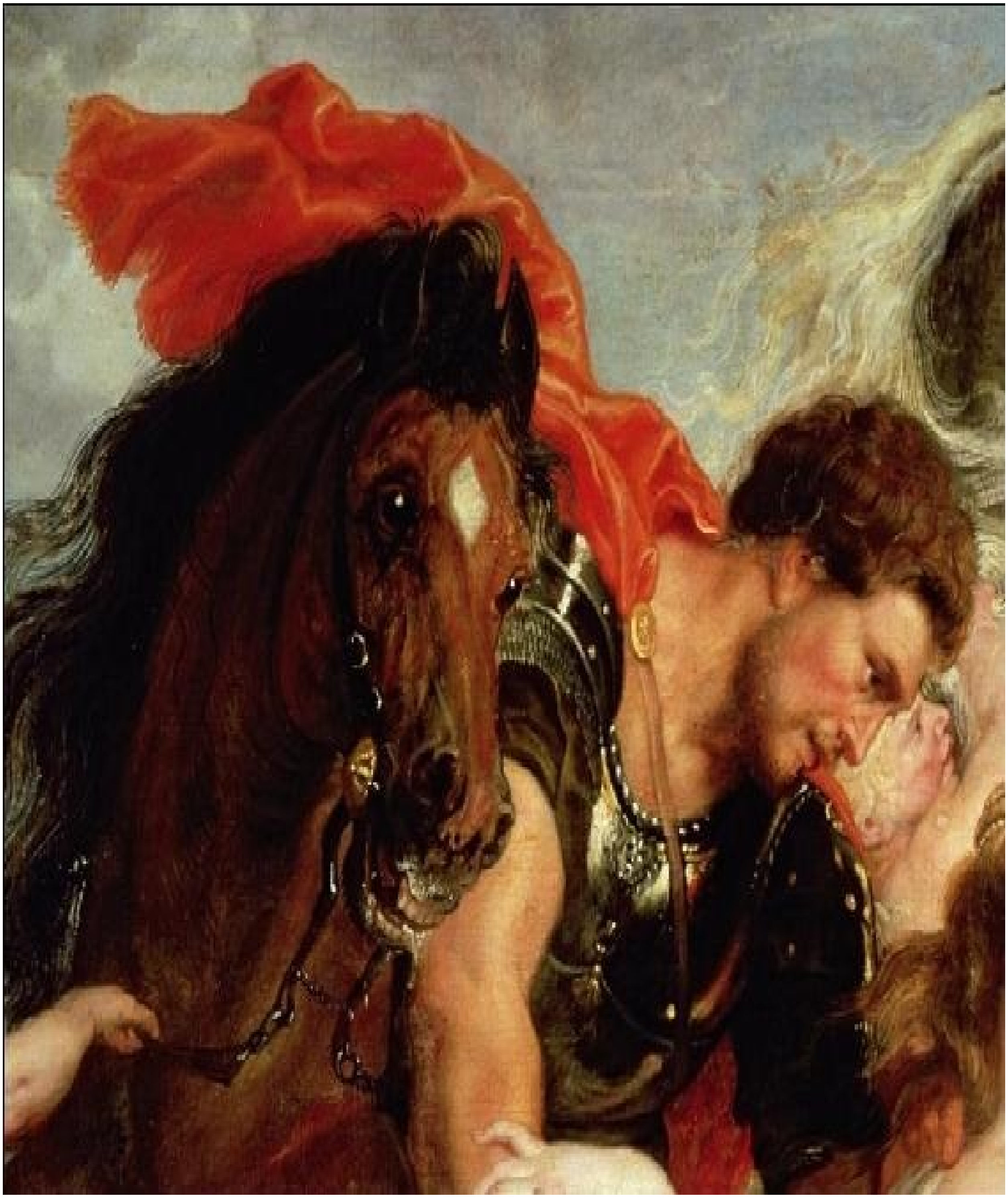
THE RAPE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF LEUCIPPUS

Housed in Munich’s Alte Pinakothek, this 1618 mythological painting concerns the rape of the daughters of King Leucippus of Messene by the demigods Castor and Pollux, as related by ancient poets such as Theocritus and Ovid. The powerful image once again indicates Rubens’ fascination for classical sculpture — this time inspired by Giovanni Bologna’s statue group *The Rape of the Sabines*, located in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. The famous Mannerist sculpture provides multiple viewpoints, presenting the scene from Roman legend with numerous aspects. Rubens emulates this diversity of expression by the use of contrasting hues and textures, as the flesh of male and female figures are juxtaposed strikingly with the red and gold drapery and the contrasting tones of the horses.

Hilaeira is raised upward, her eyes looking heavenwards, as a saint would appear in ecstasy in a religious painting, mirroring the form of Michelangelo’s *Leda*. Once again the twisted forms of the body indicate the influence of the *Laocoön* statue group, which would influence so many of Rubens’ secular and sacred works. The dramatic range of gestures and the towering horse are heightened by the unusually low vantage point, while most of the backdrop is dominated by the sky. Mysteriously, a cupid holds the horse’s reins, while glimpsing mischievously out of the canvas, perhaps signalling the eventual fate of the daughters, who were to be happily married to the demigods.





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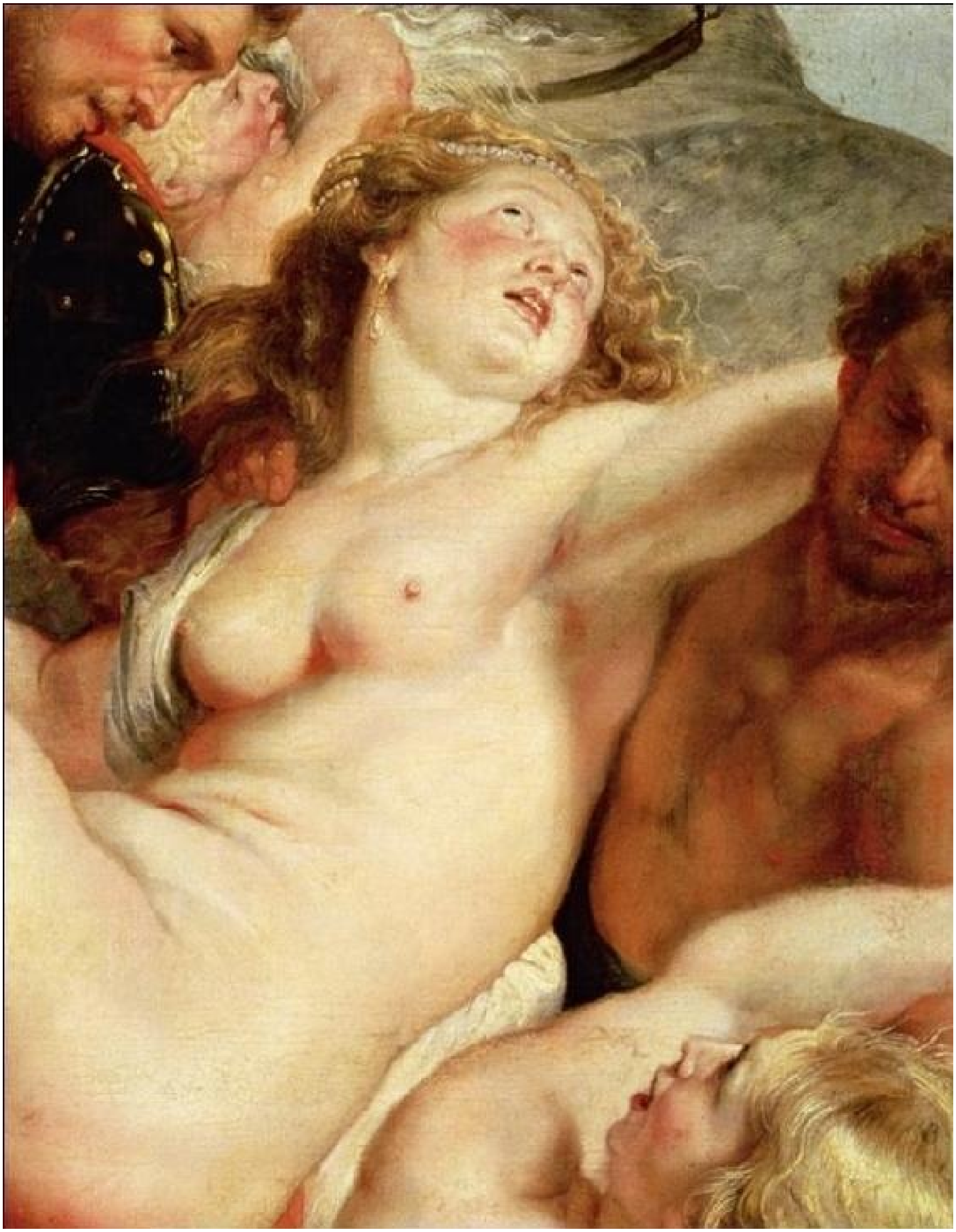

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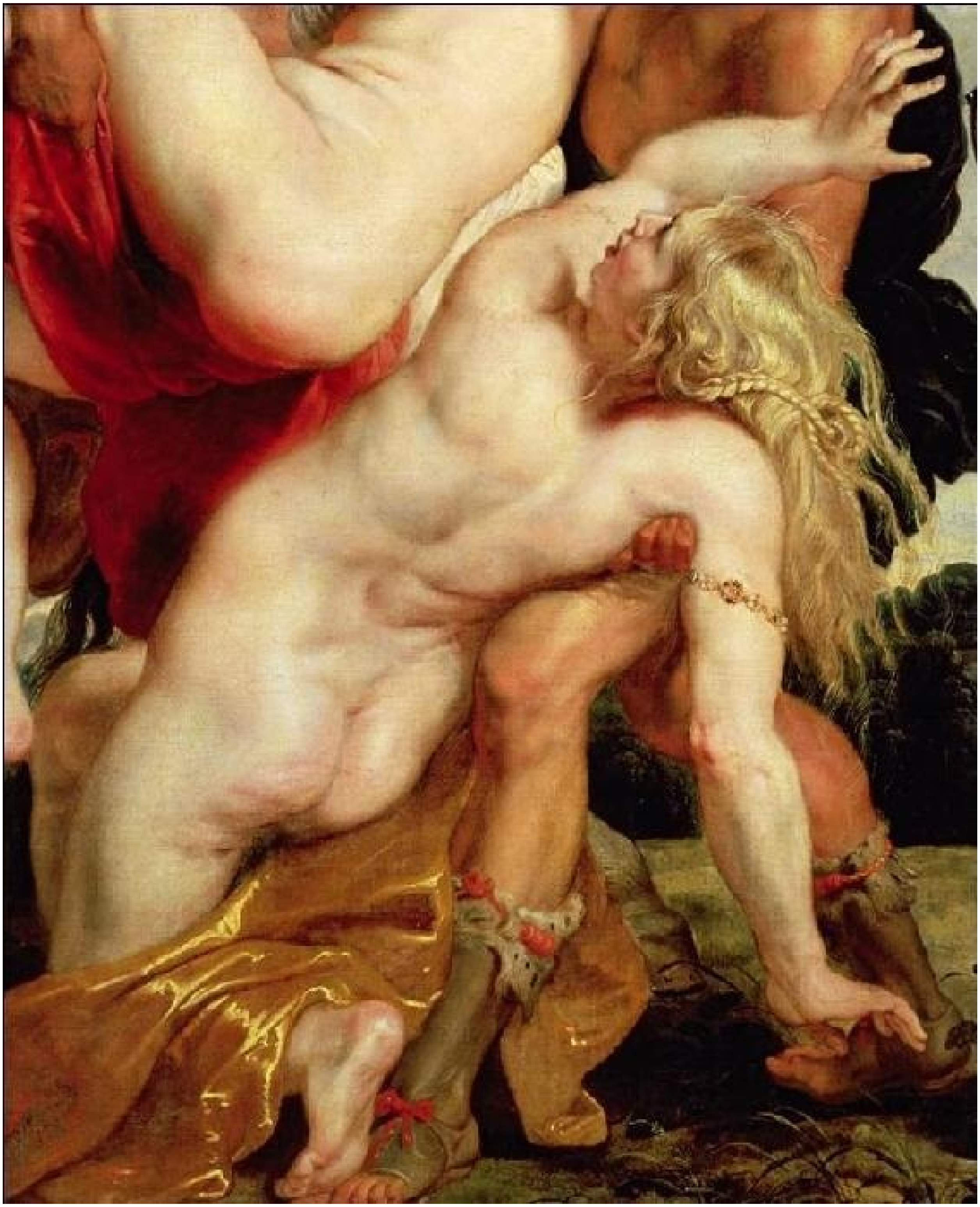

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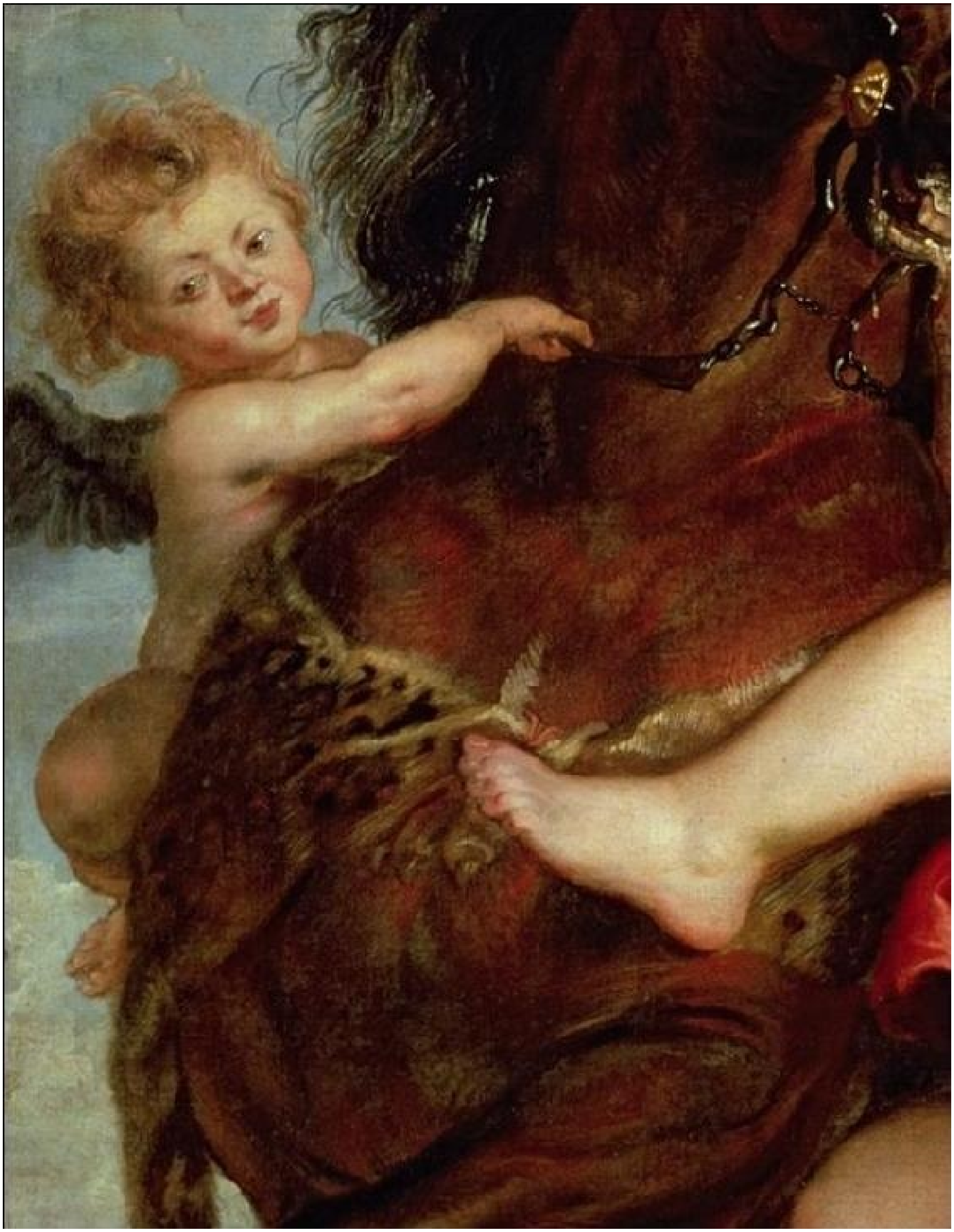

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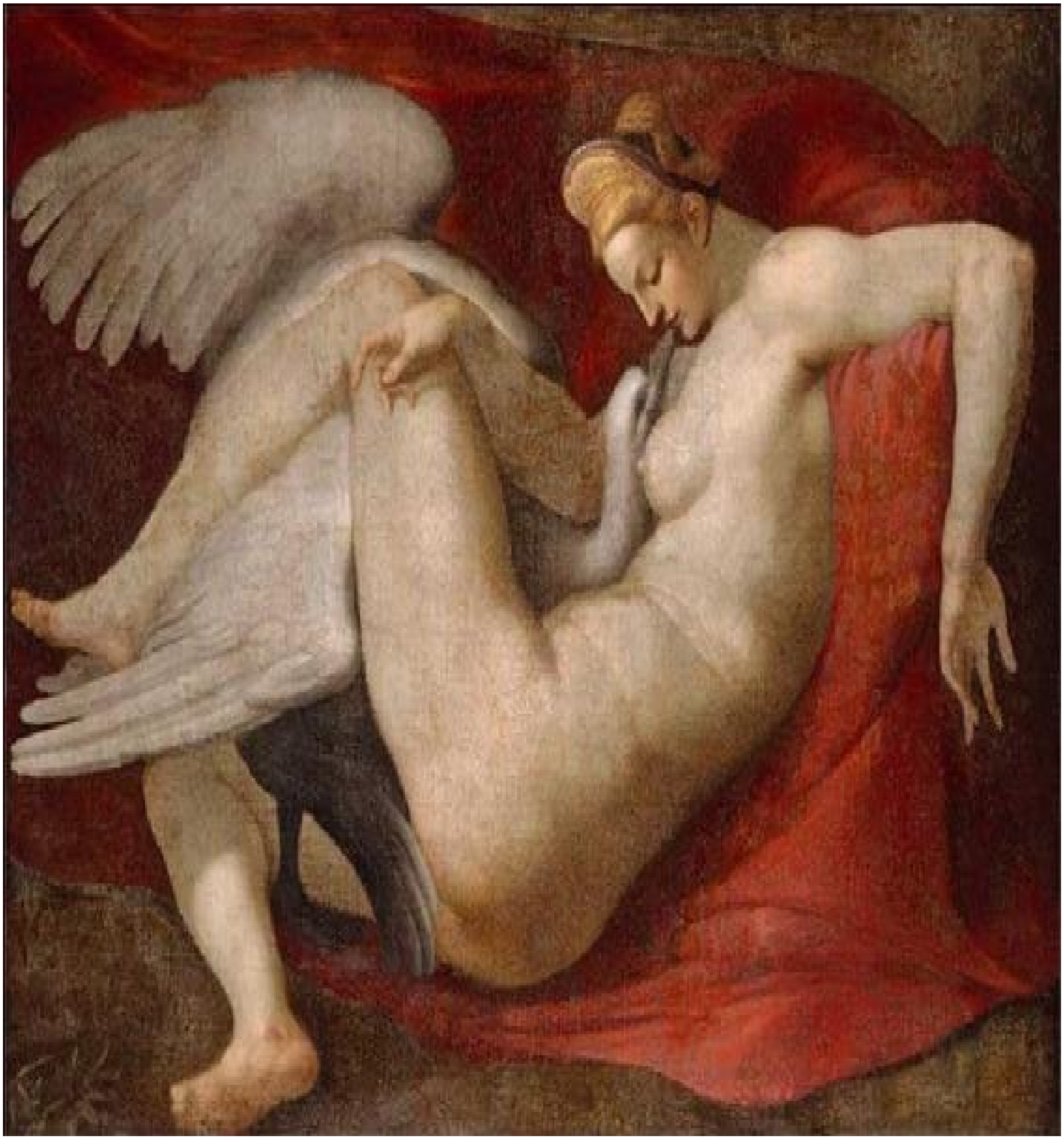
'The Rape of the Sabine Women' by Giovanni Bologna, Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence



'Leda and the Swan', a 16th-century copy by Rubens, after a lost painting by Michelangelo

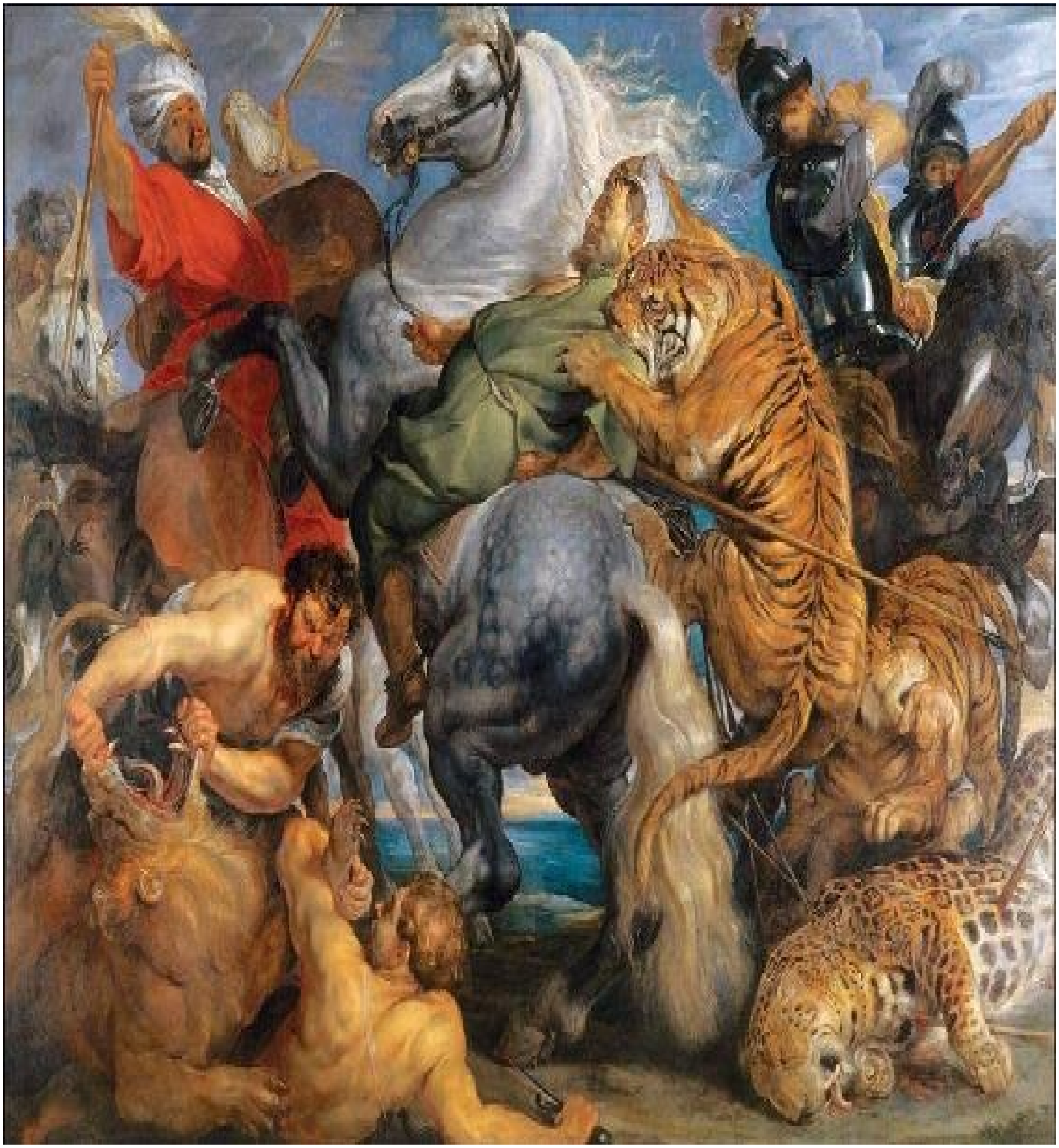
A TIGER HUNT

This large

painting features a hunt for a tiger and dates between 1615 and 1616. One of the four hunting paintings, commissioned by Maximilian I, Elector of Bavaria, to decorate the old Schleissheim Palace, the painting is now held in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes. The cycle of paintings was seized during the Napoleonic Wars and only *The Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt* was returned to Munich. On first seeing the hunting cycle of pictures, the celebrated English portrait painter and critic Sir Joshua Reynolds, exclaimed that Rubens' "animals, particularly lions and horses, are so admirable that it might be said they were never properly represented but by him."

The cycle

comprised *The Wild Bear Hunt, A Tiger Hunt, A Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt* and a culminating *Lion Hunt.* The subjects were mostly exotic, set in far-off lands with turbaned Arabs and Africans often the protagonists of the scene, adding a far-off charm to the compositions. The depiction of the tiger hunt is particularly charged with dramatic intensity, as Rubens represents the animals realistically, with the aid of Renaissance prints and classical statues, as well as life studies he made while visiting the Archdukes' zoo in Brussels. The composition was initially planned on a sheet of chalk sketches, followed by oil sketches and several figure studies in chalk drawn from life.



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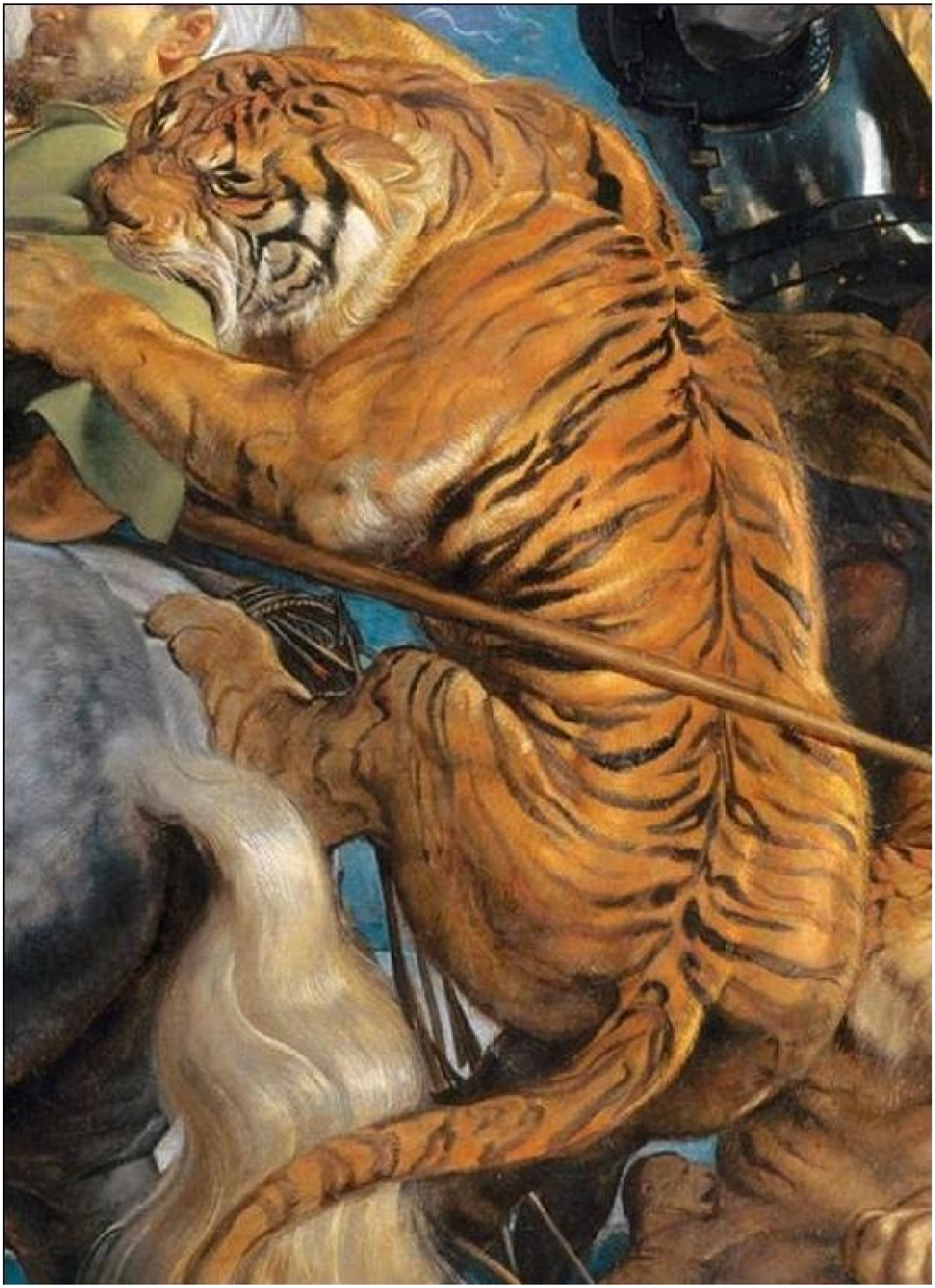

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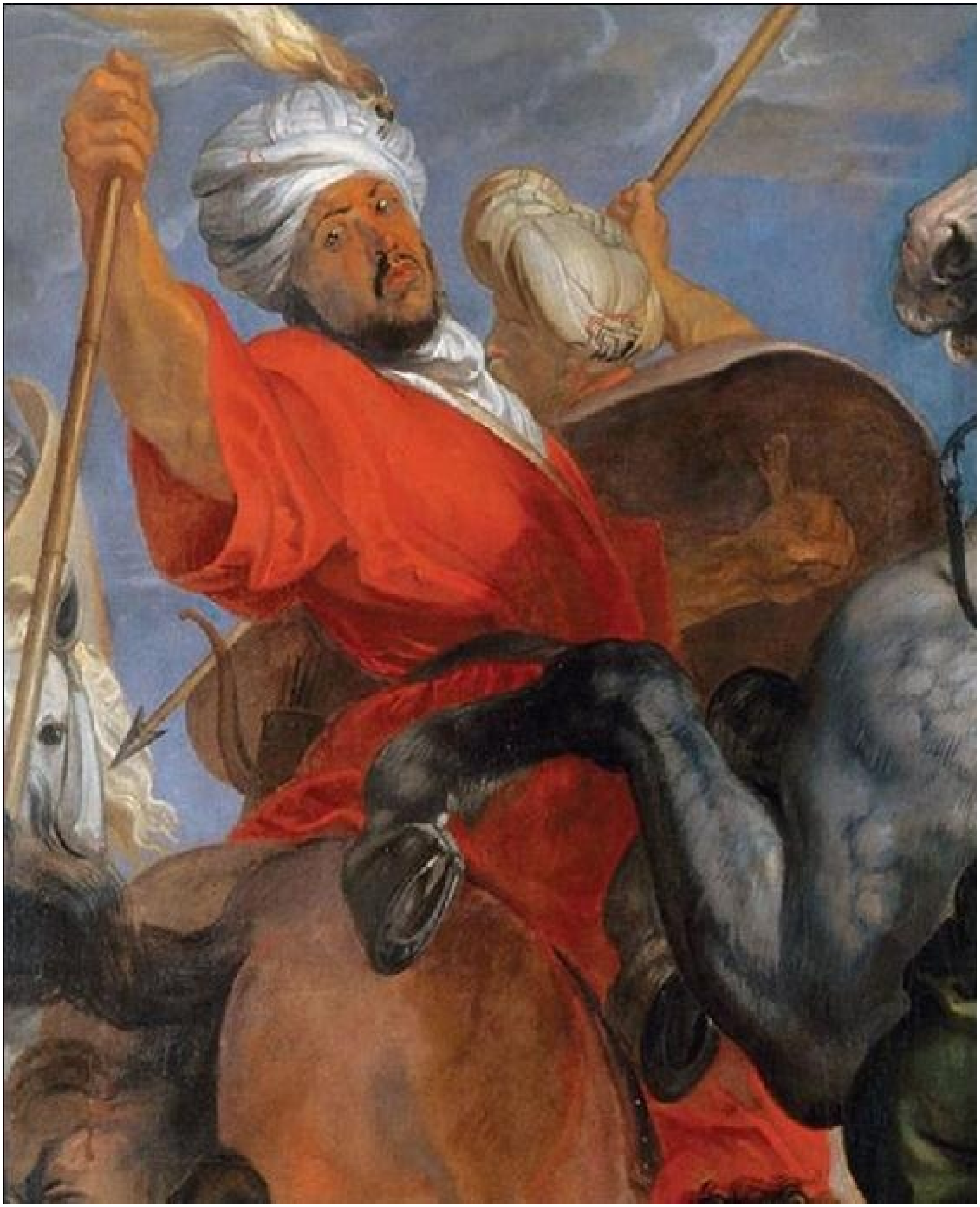

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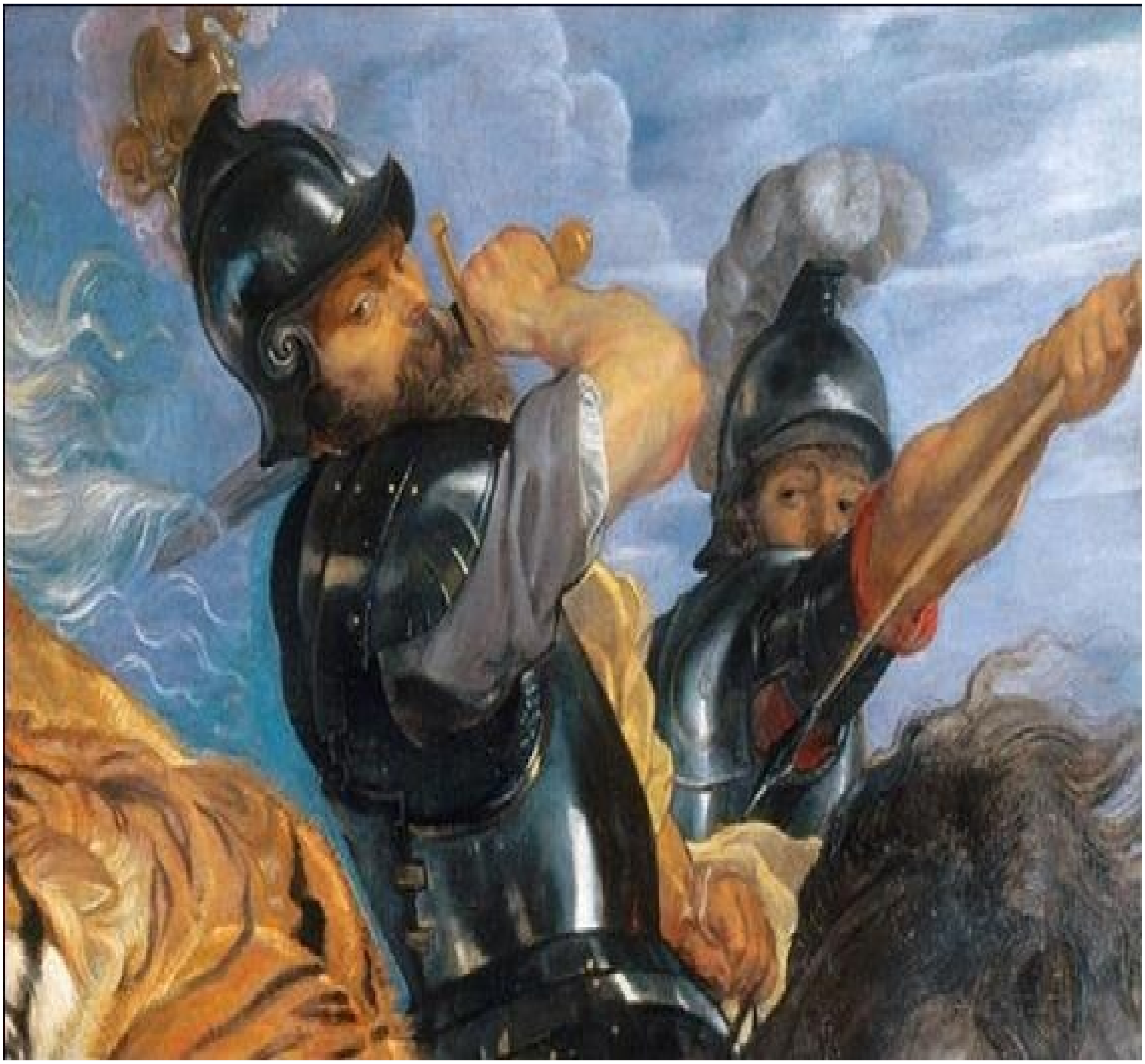

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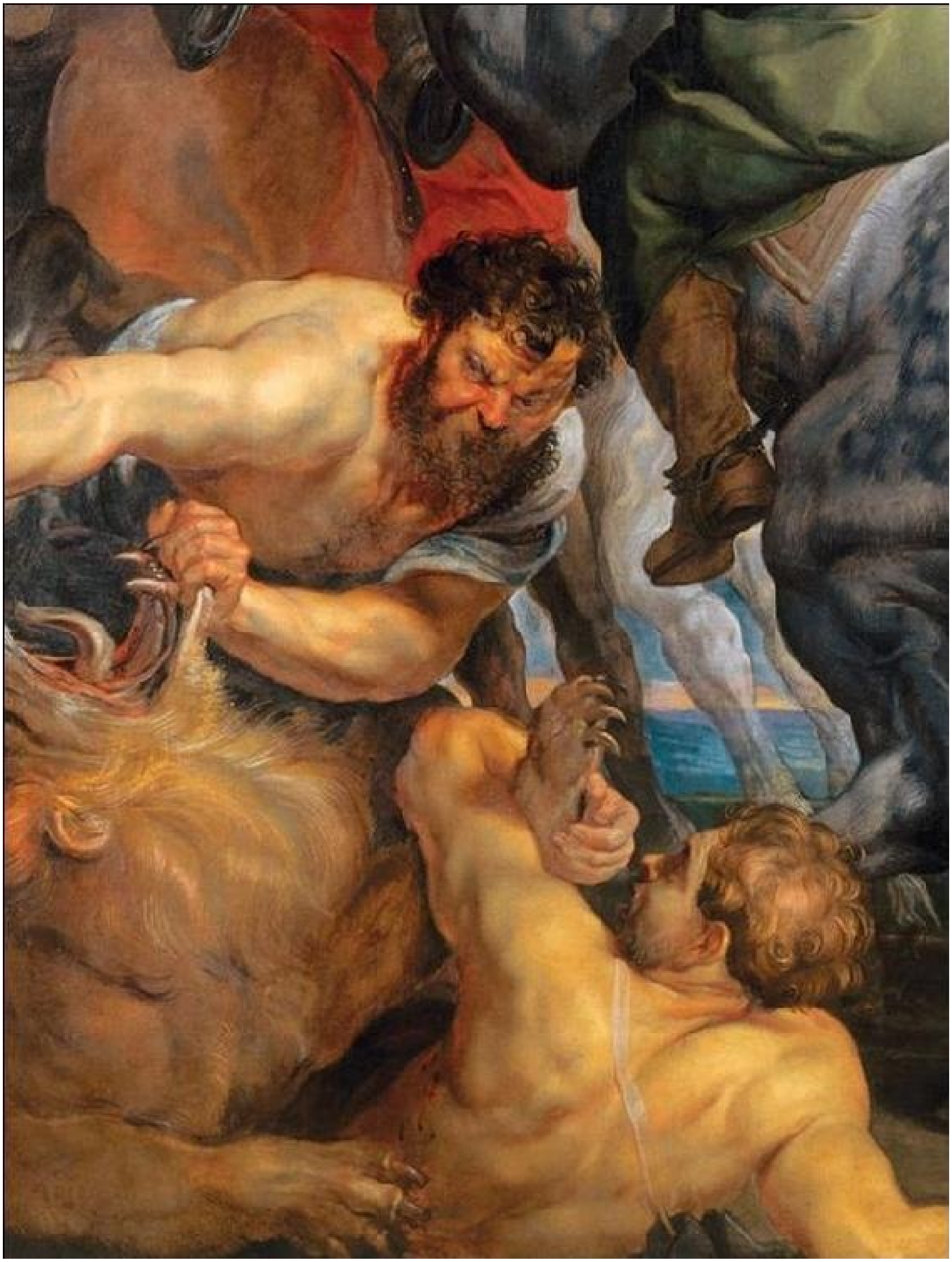

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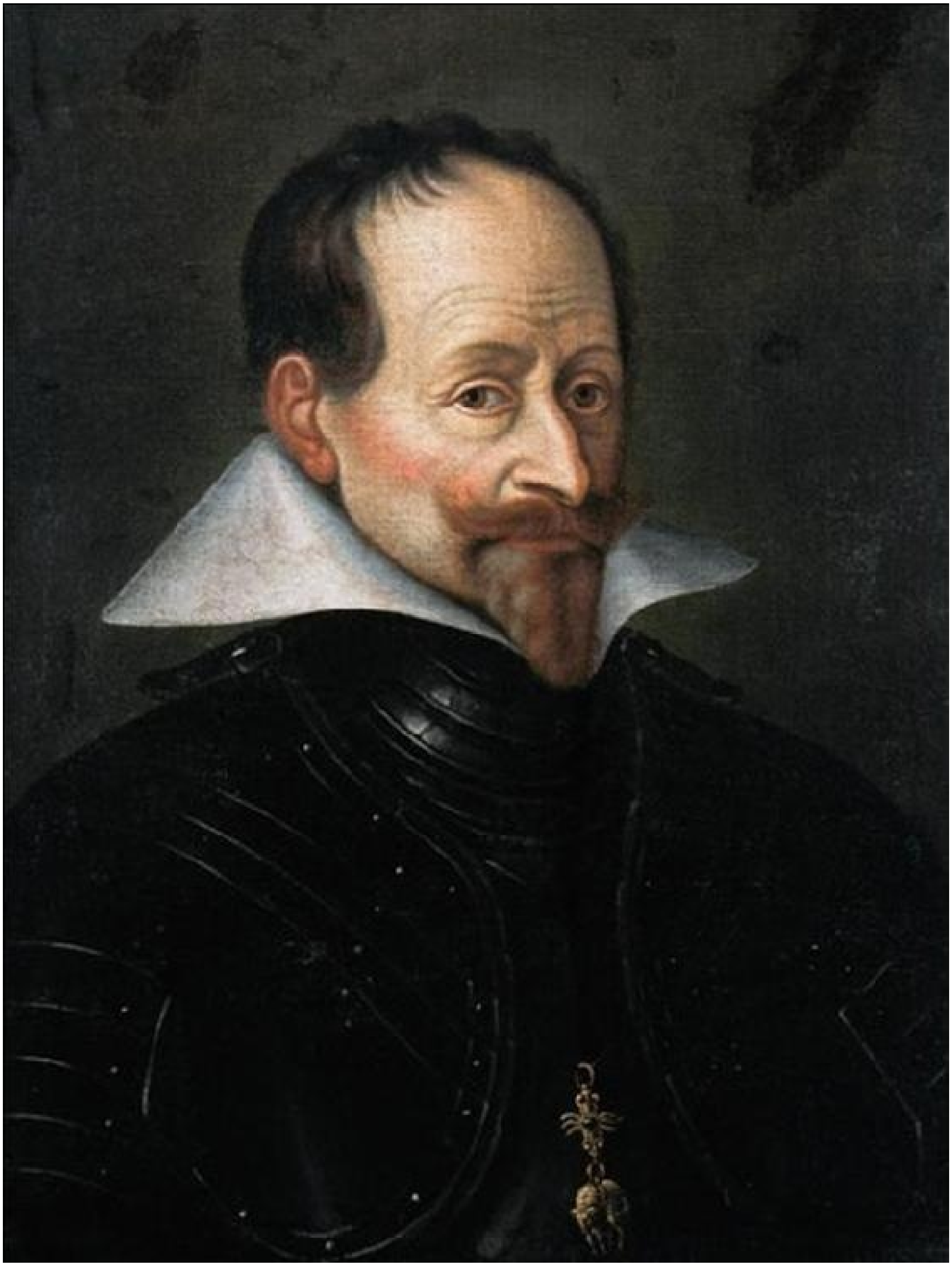
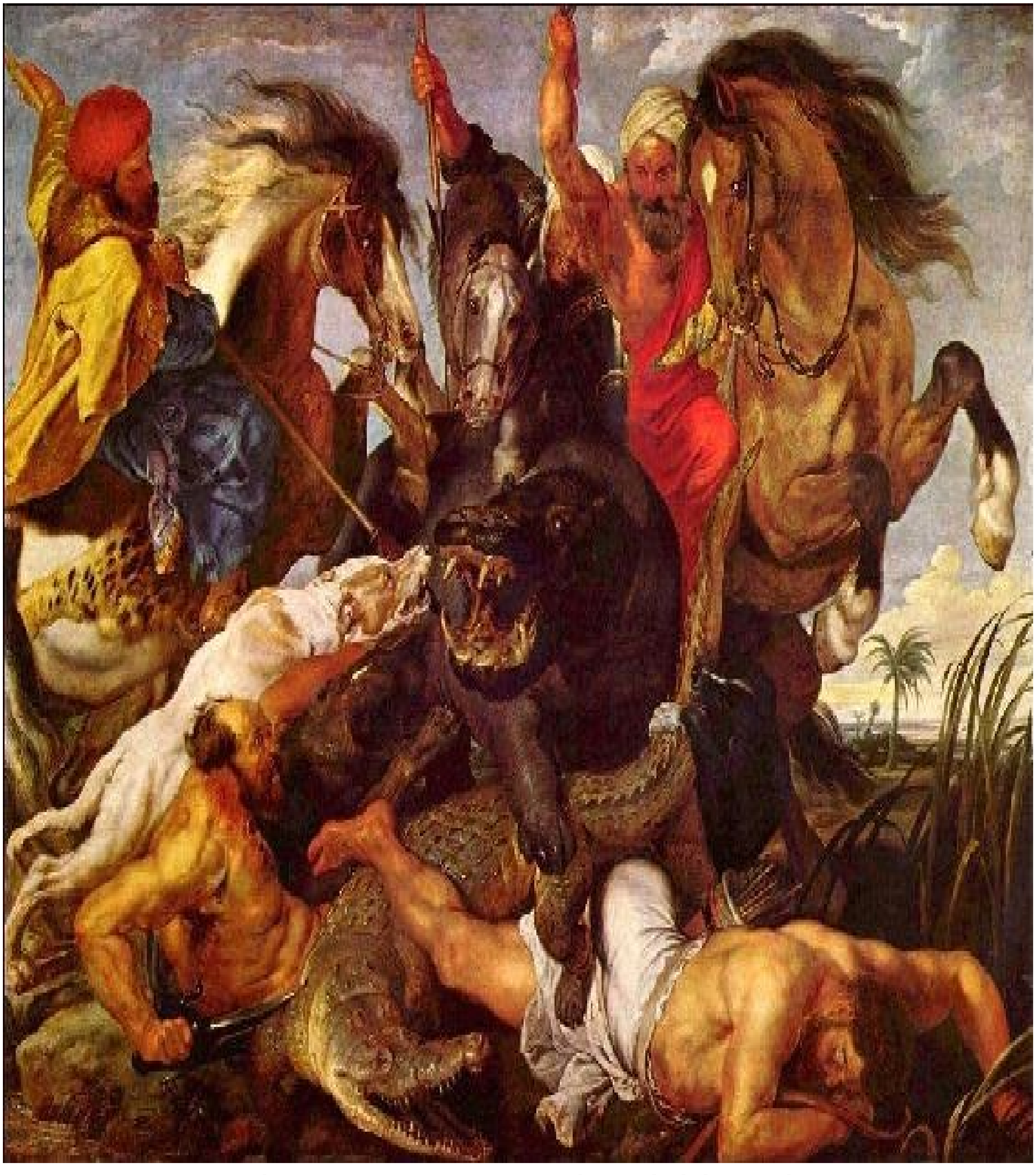


Maximilian I. (1573-1651 in Ingolstadt) called “the Great”, was a Wittelsbach ruler of Bavaria and a prince-elector (Kurfürst) of the Holy Roman Empire. He commissioned Rubens’ great cycle of four hunting *scenes.*

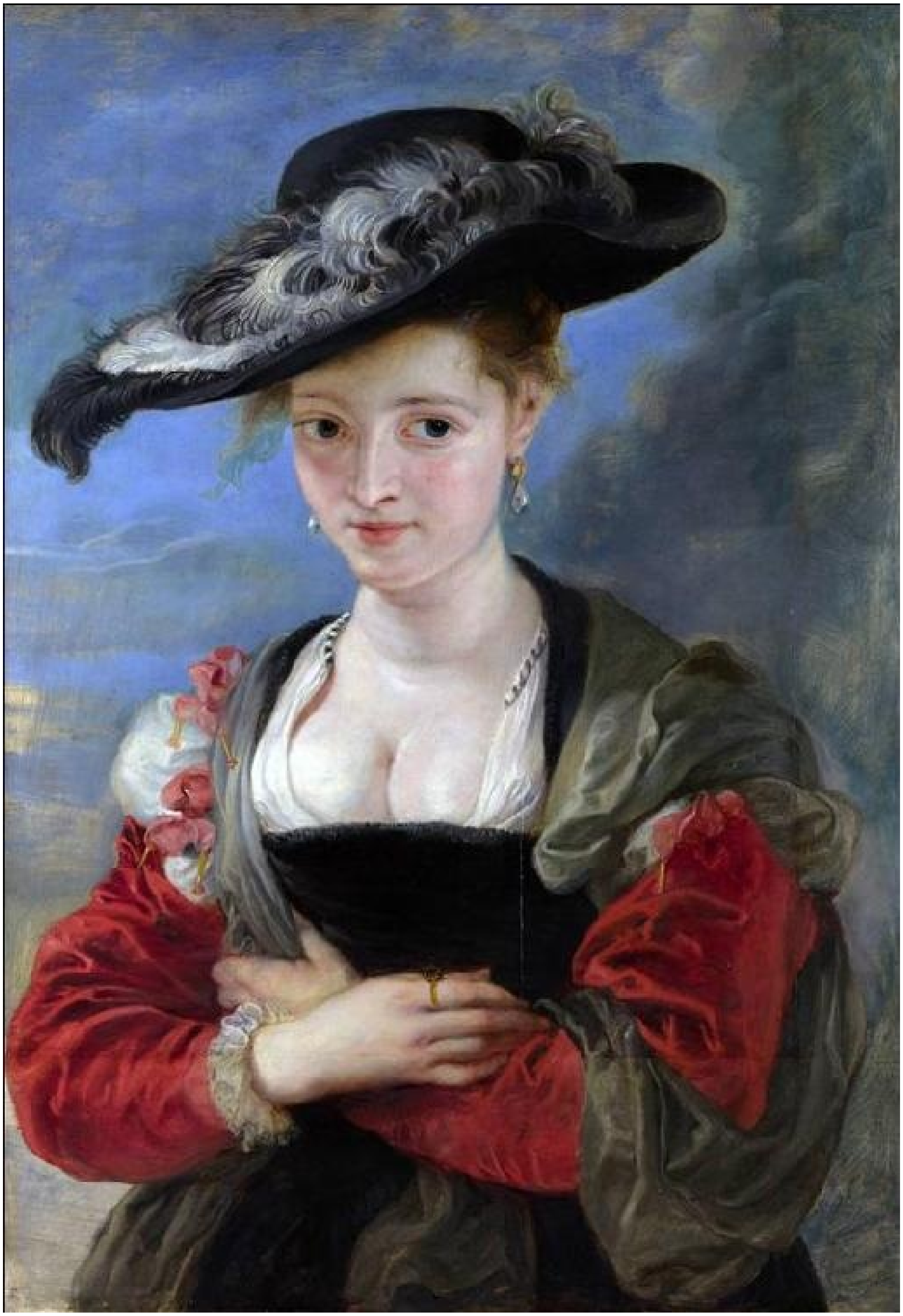


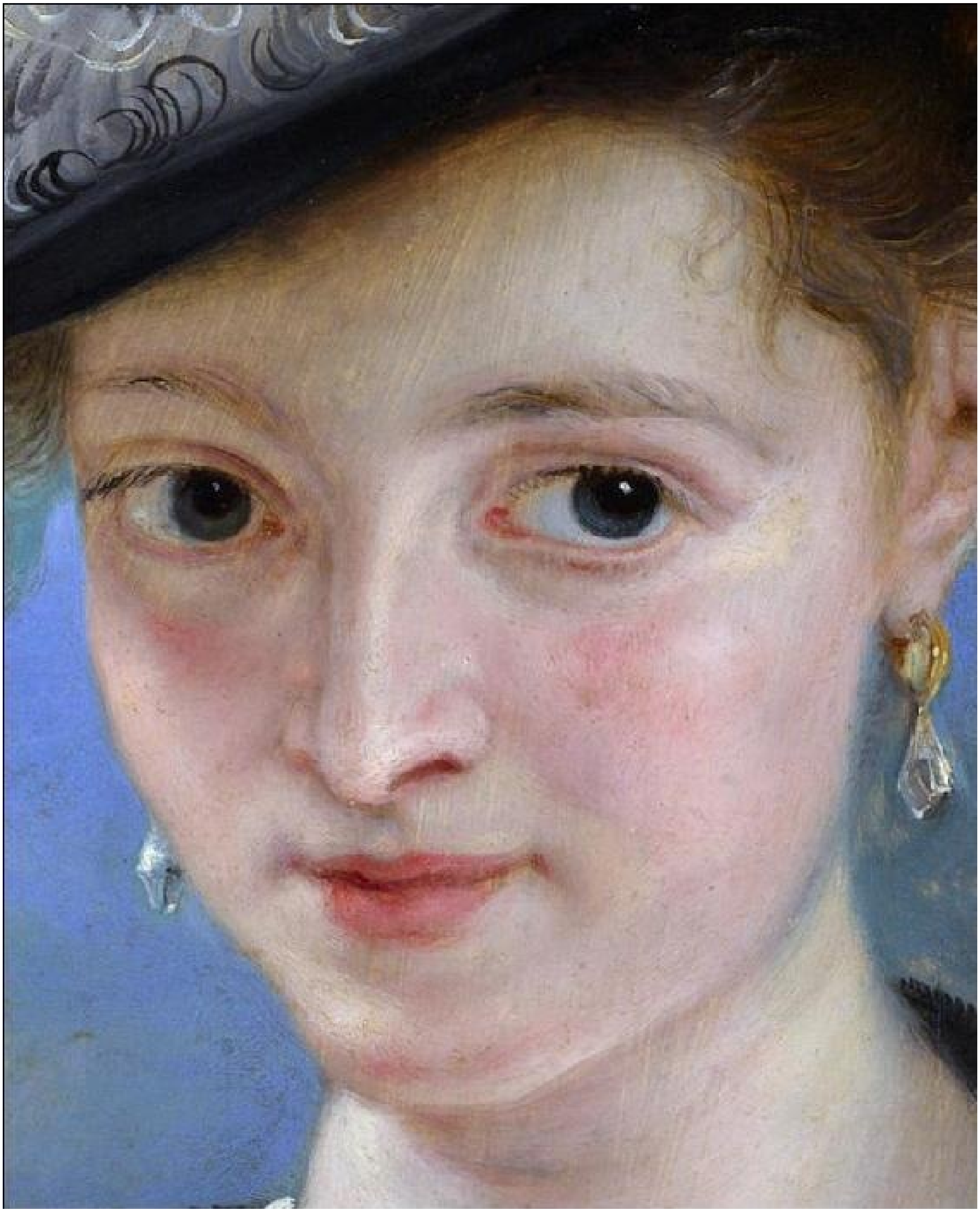
'The Hippopotamus Hunt', 1616, Alte Pinakothek, Munich

PORTRAIT OF SUSANNA FOURMENT

Also known as *The Straw Hat*, this famous portrait is now housed in the National Gallery, London and presents Susanna Lunden (née Fourment), the elder sister of Rubens’ future second wife Helena Fourment. The portrait has been dated to the time of Susanna’s second marriage in 1622, to Arnold Lunden, an Antwerp tapestry and silk merchant. Her younger sister Helena became Rubens’ second wife in 1630.

The sitter’s direct glance from under the shadow of the hat, together with the ring on her finger, suggests that the painting is a marriage portrait. It is now believed that Rubens enlarged the painting as he proceeded, adding a third strip of wood on the right and then enlarging the picture at the base. The additions created a greater amount of sky, with added clouds to the right, contrasting with the clearer sky to the left, from which the light falls across Susanna’s figure and hands. She is holding a gray shawl with her arms demurely crossed below a black dress with an open chemise. As sunlight streaks across her right cheek, slim neck and bosom, her face is rendered in strong contrast, shaded by her hat, which is illumined by reflected light. Her incandescent glow of skin is achieved by the artist’s thin oil glazes, which he applied to a surface of smooth plaster of Paris, after lightly streaking the canvas with a layer of gray charcoal to create a varied, reflecting base for the translucent layers of pigment.





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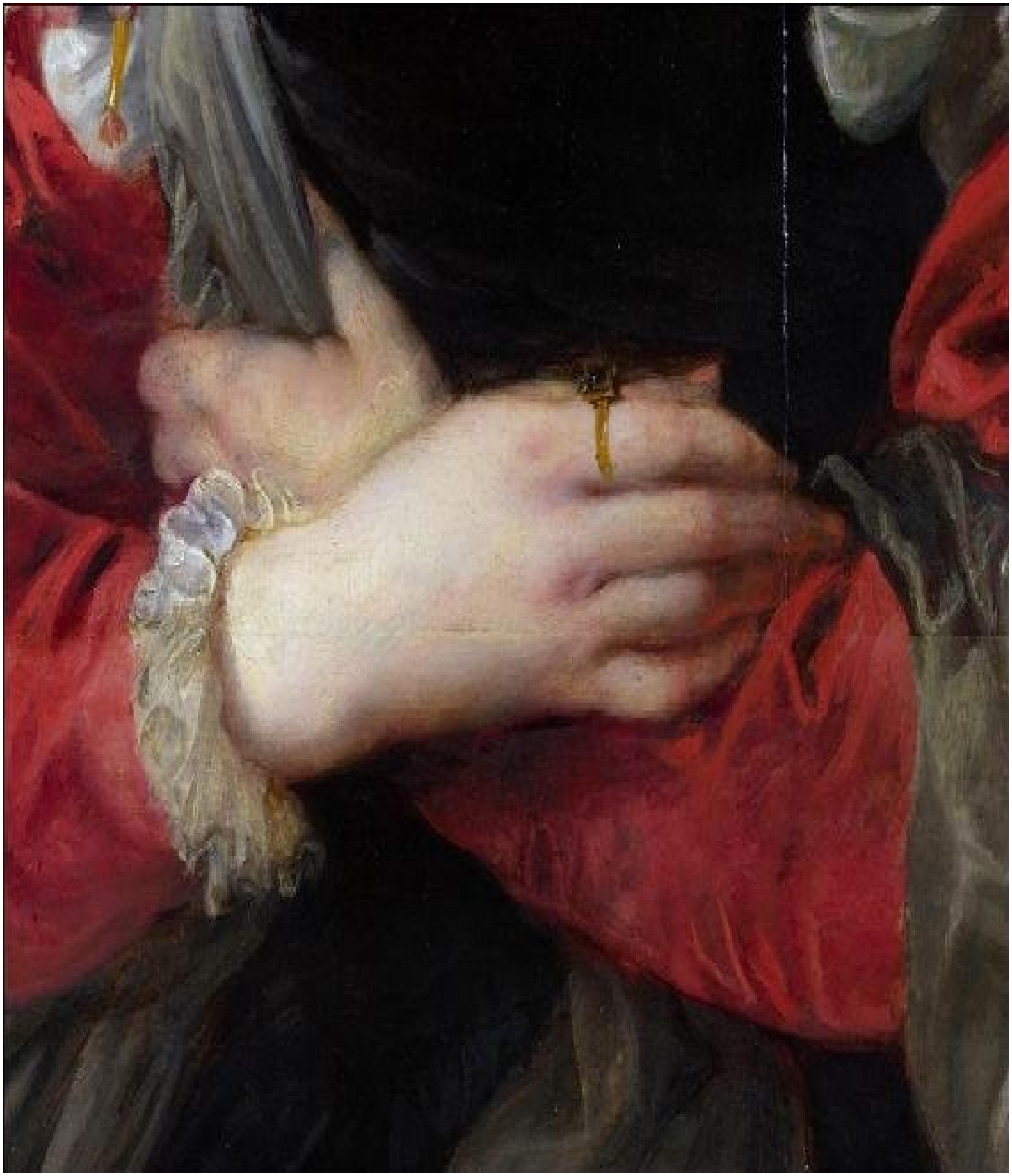

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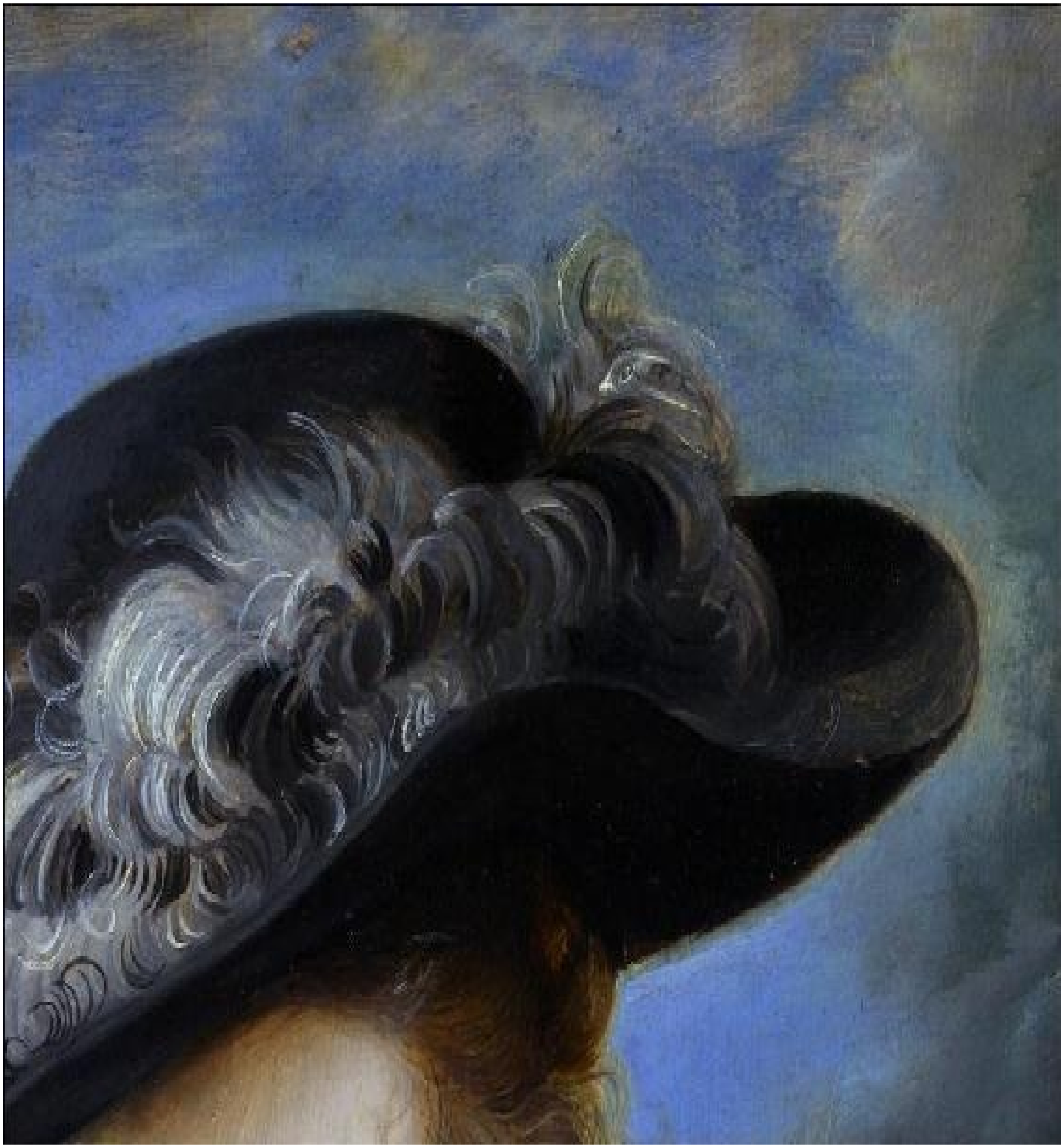

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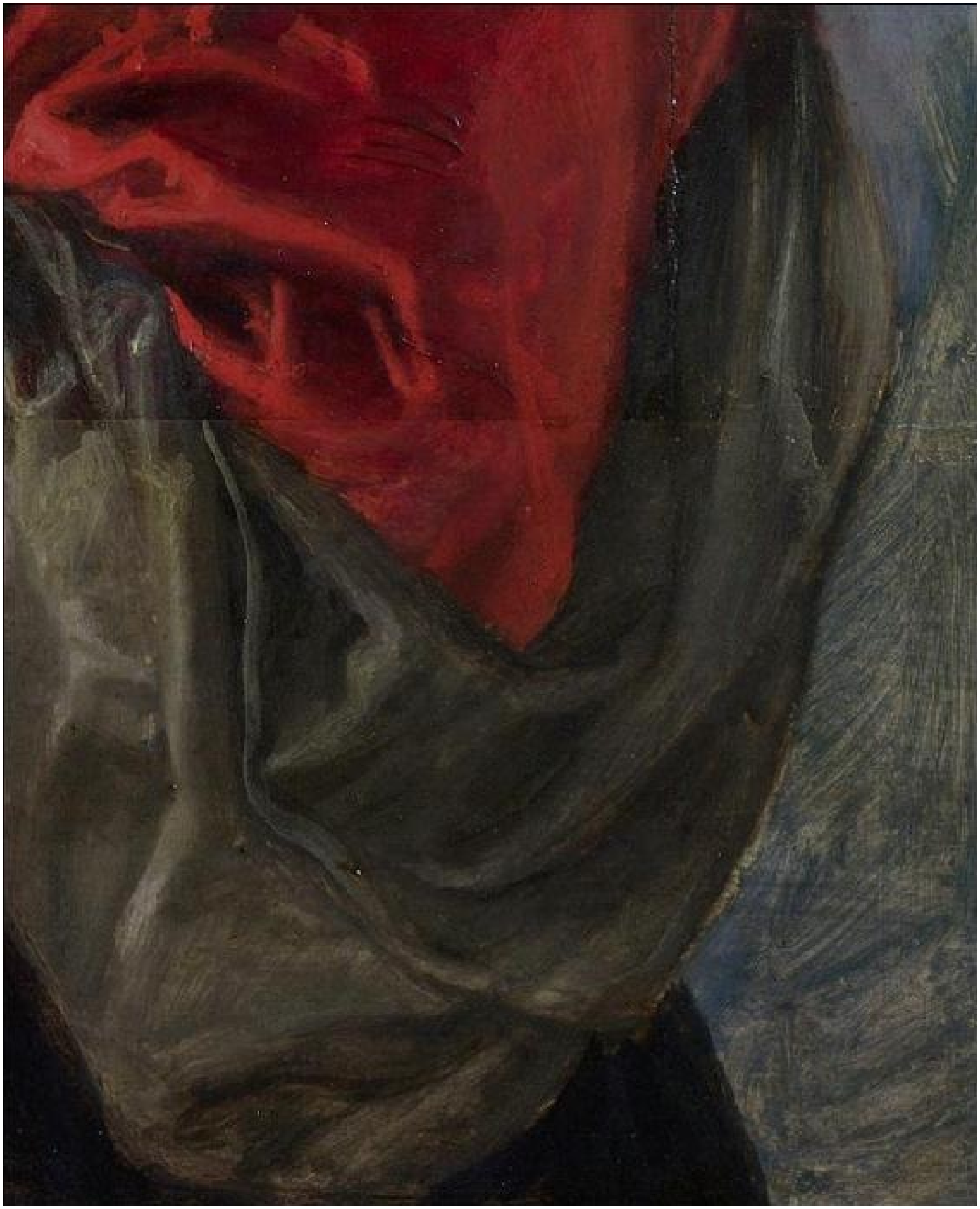

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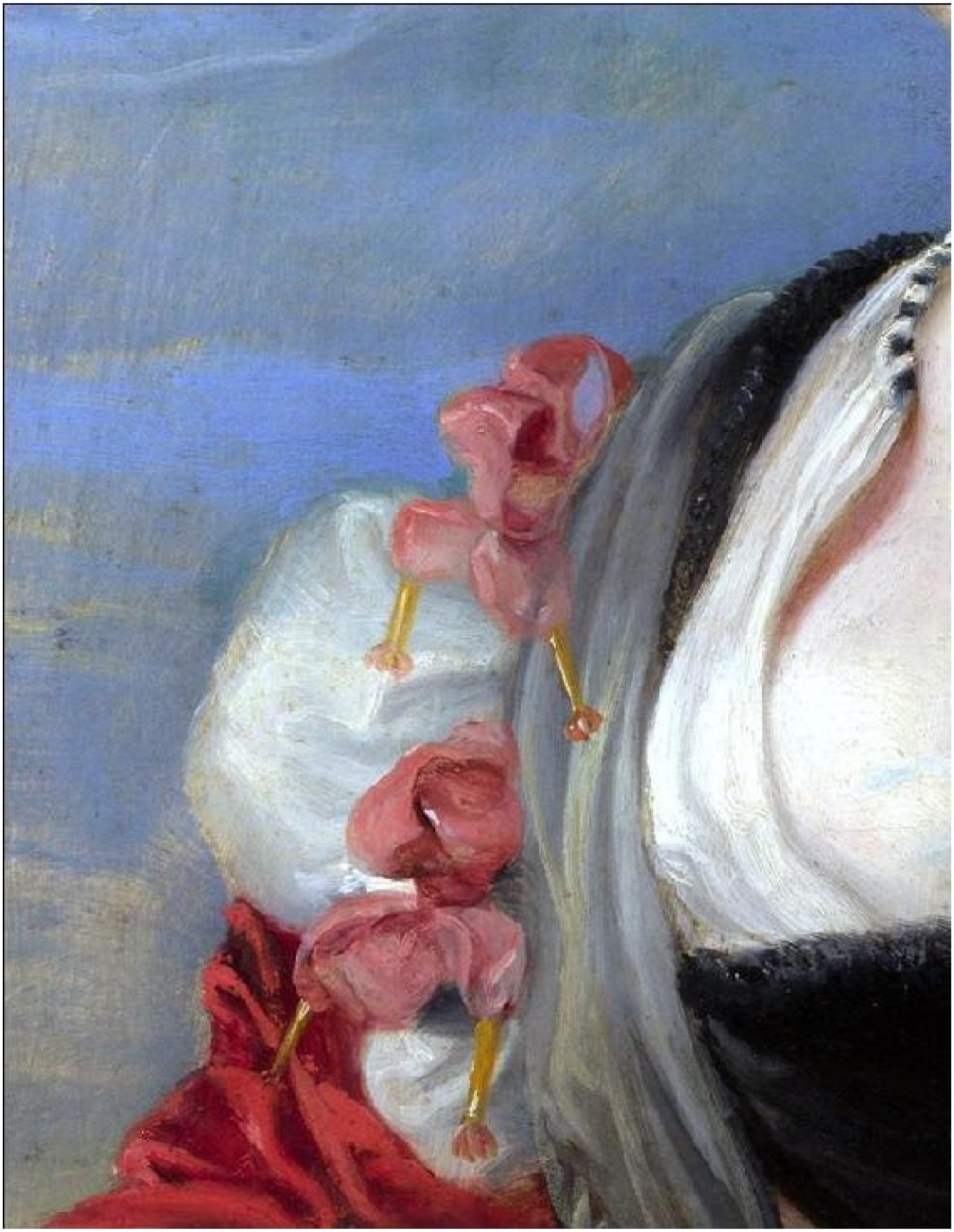

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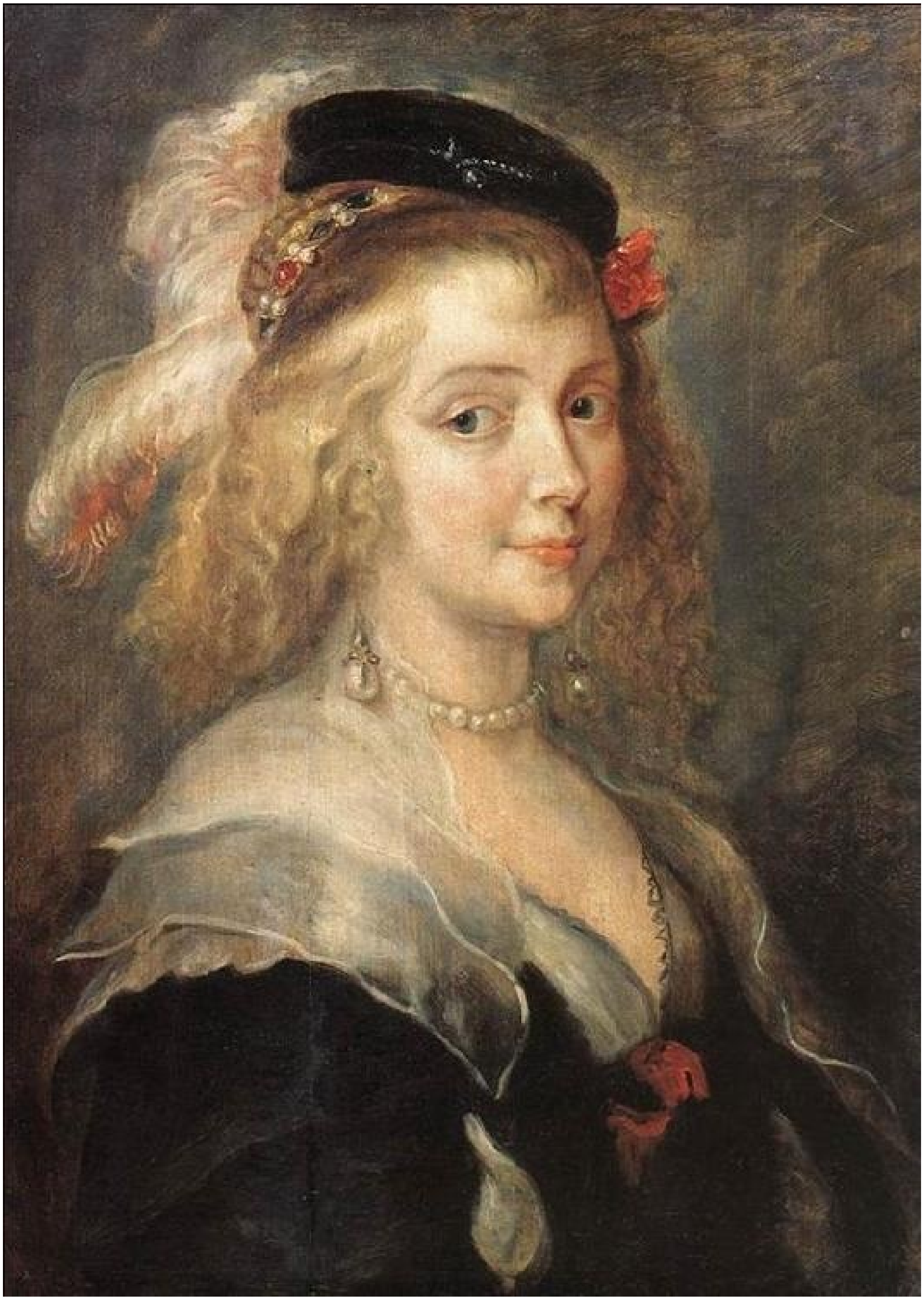


Rubens’ second wife, Helena Fourment, circa 1630, by Jan Boeckhorst. Rubens’ first wife, Isabella Brant, died of the plague in 1626, when she was 34 years old. Rubens married Helena Fourment, Isabella’s niece.

four years after the death of his first wife.

HENRY IV RECEIVING THE PORTRAIT OF MARIE DE' MEDICI

In February 1622

Rubens won the prestigious commission of painting twenty-four scenes of the life and 'heroic deeds' of the Dowager Queen of the King of France, Henry IV.

Marie de' Medici was the twenty-five-year-old daughter of the Medici grand duke of Tuscany and they were married after Henry IV divorced the childless Marguerite de Valois in the hope of a more fruitful, as well as prosperous second marriage. Due to her mostly mundane career at the French court, Rubens had to depend on his most creative powers of invention in order to complete the commission.

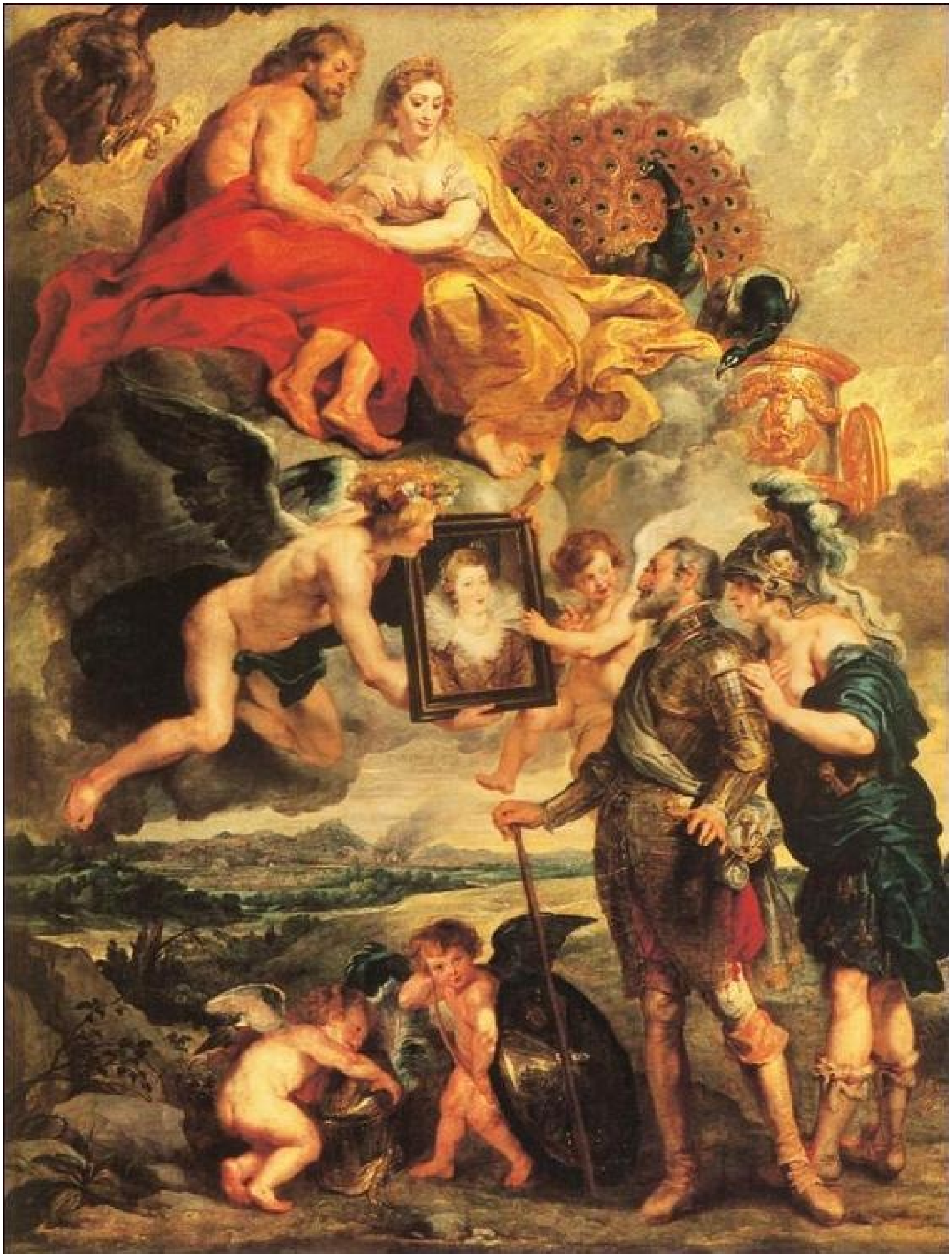
The following plate is the fourth scene in the cycle, where Henry IV is first presented the portrait of Marie. As the betrothed couple had not met previous to their wedding, Rubens staged their initial meeting through this poetic scene. Henry receives the portrait of his future bride, accompanied by Hymen, the god of marriage, and Cupid, the god of love, who directs the King's gaze to a portrait of Marie. The personification of France, known as Gallia, is represented in a plumed helmet and is adorned with a fleurs-de-lis, as she gently encourages the king. Gathered in the clouds above, the Olympian couple Jupiter and Juno look approvingly down on the scene, their hands joined in a symbol of concord. The scene is, of course, entirely fictitious, though it clearly demonstrates Rubens' deft skill in flattering his wealthy and noble patrons and his competent ease in carrying out grand and challenging commissions.

After

negotiating the terms of the contract, the project was to be completed within two years, coinciding with the marriage of Marie's daughter, Henrietta Maria.

Twenty-one of the paintings depict Marie's own struggles and triumphs in life.

The remaining three are portraits of herself and her parents. The paintings now hang in the Paris' Louvre in the Richelieu wing. To execute such a large scale cycle in so short a time required the full employment of Rubens' studio, though the final surfaces indicate Rubens' brushwork. Amusingly, the artist's greatest difficulty was getting paid for the commission and he later wrote that the whole project had been the most unprofitable commission throughout his career. Nevertheless, the prolific and masterful quality of the completed cycle evinces the raw genius and logistical brilliance of the master.



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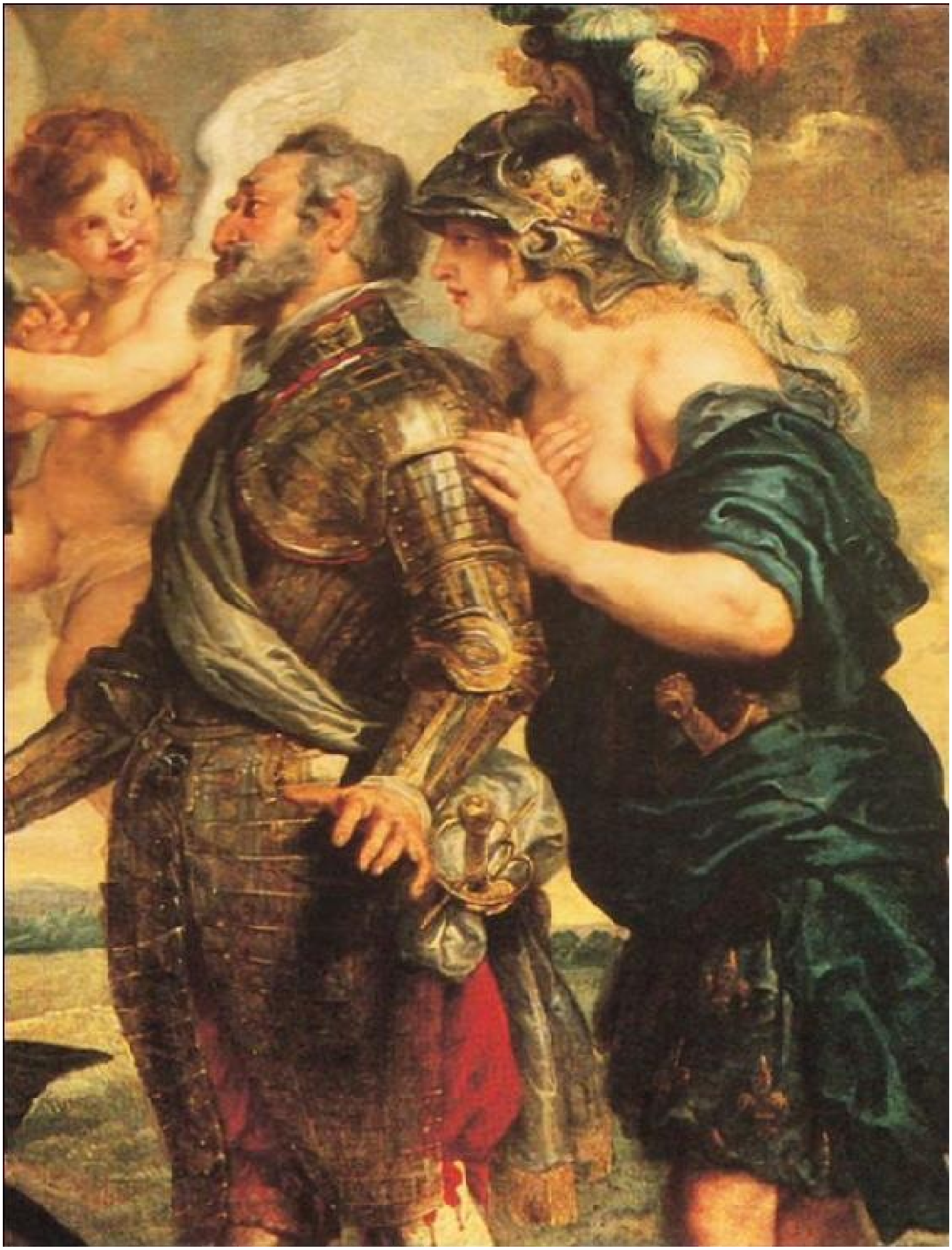

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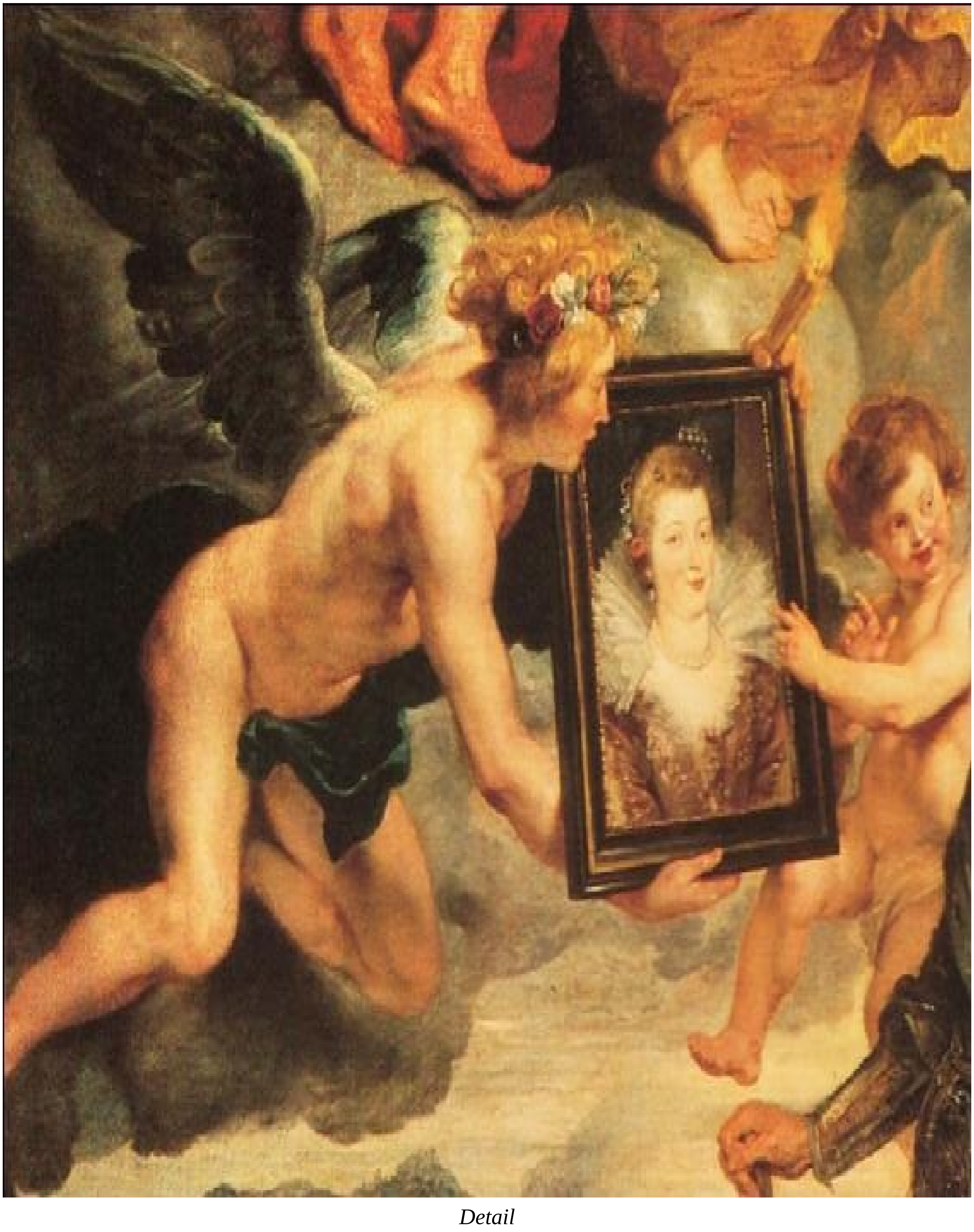

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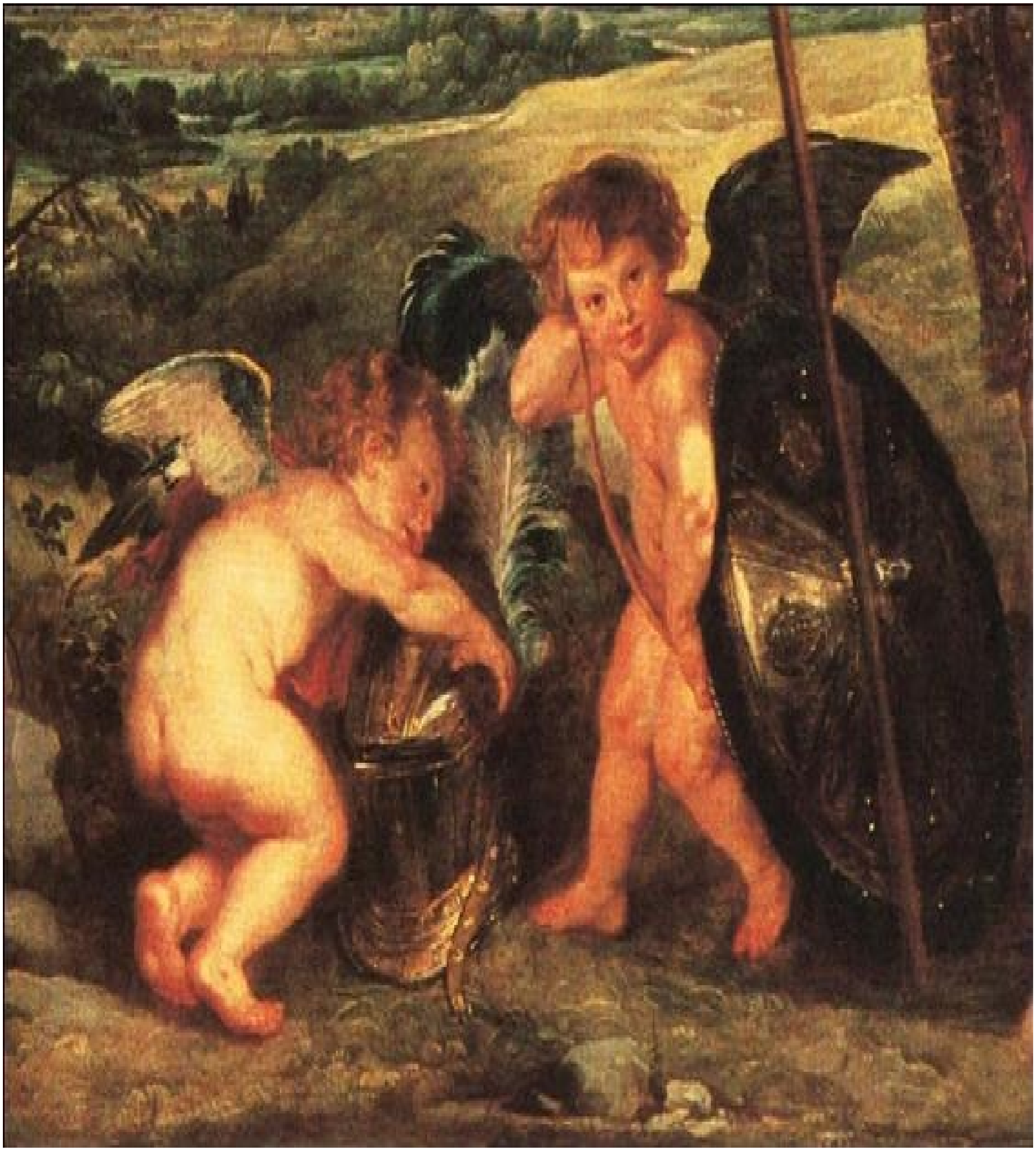

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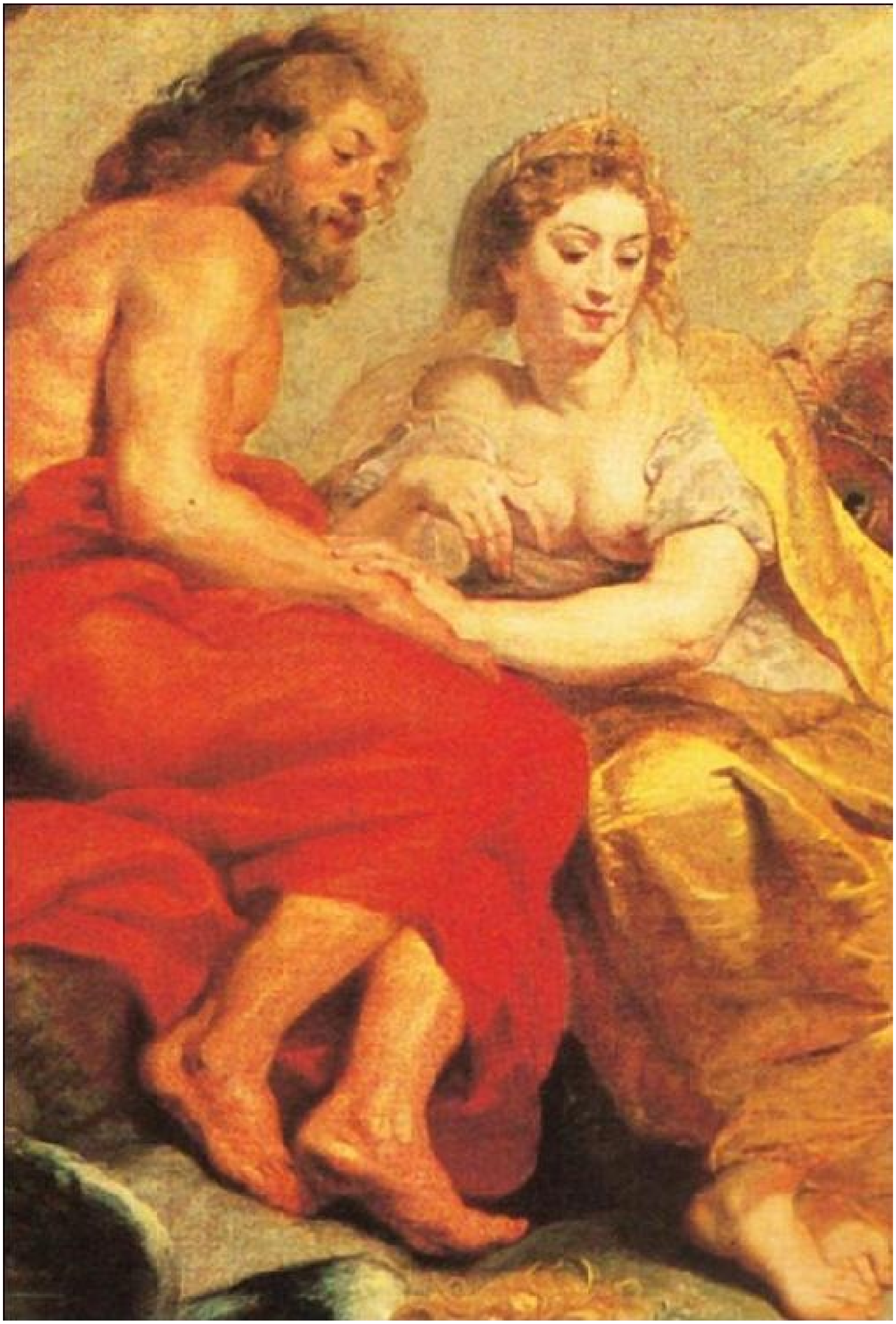

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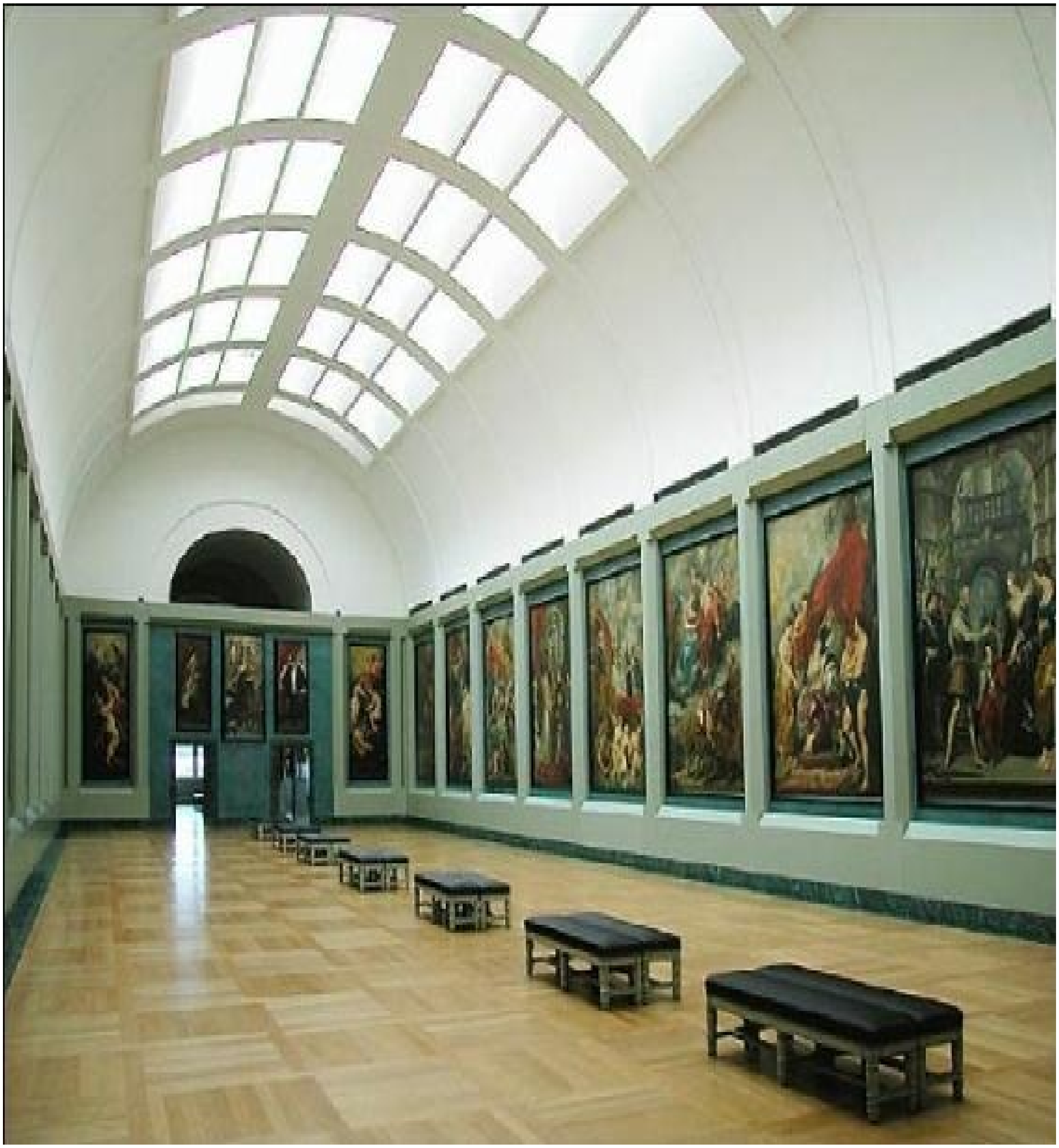


The cycle in situ

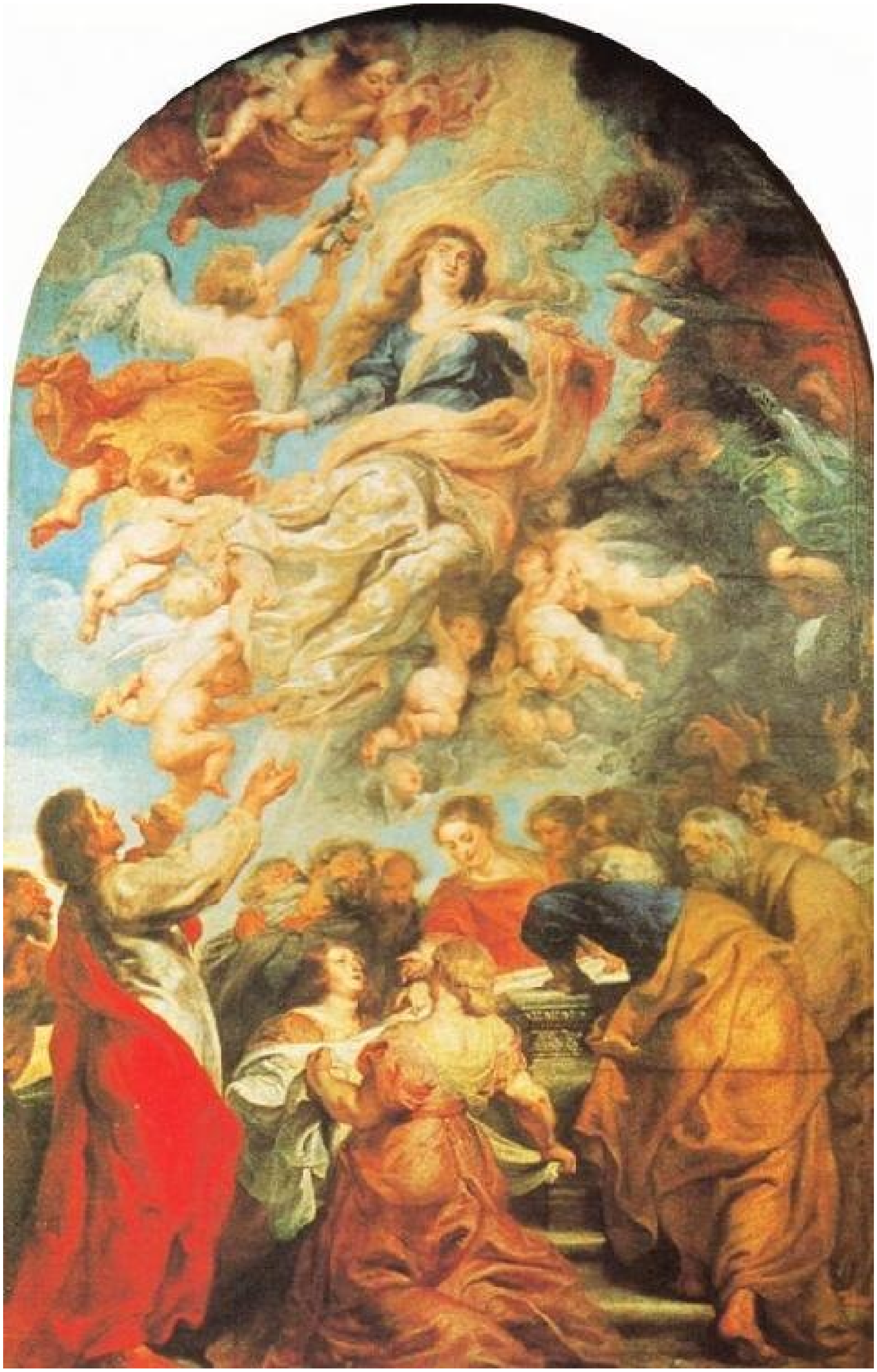
THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

This grand

painting was completed in 1626 as an altarpiece for the high altar of the Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp, where it remains to this day. The image presents the Assumption of Mary, accompanied by a choir of angels, lifting her heavenwards in a spiralling motion, in the direction of a burst of divine light. Around the Virgin’s tomb, the twelve apostles are depicted with gestures and expressions of awe and reverence. The women in the painting are thought to be Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary’s two sisters. A kneeling woman holds a flower, referring to the lilies that were reported to have miraculously filled the empty coffin.

In 1618 the cathedral’s Dean, Johannes del Rio, had commissioned the altarpiece as a family memorial. The celebrated sculptors Jan and Robert de Noie were commissioned in 1621 to erect a frame for the altarpiece and the foundation stone was laid on May 2, 1624. Then Rubens began work on the full scale painting, which was interrupted in August the following year, as Rubens and his family left Antwerp to escape the plague. On his return in February 1626, he was given permission to close off the sanctuary in order to work on the painting undisturbed.

The finished piece once again demonstrates the artist’s regard for the religious works of the Venetian master Titian. Clear parallels can be seen between Rubens’ altarpiece and Titian’s *Assumption of the Virgin* (1518) on the high altar in the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice. Like Titian’s Madonna, Rubens portrays his as borne aloft by a cloud of putti, forming a rhythmic grouping of celestial grace notes, while four angels surround her, while two of the seraphs hold a crown of flowers. The rich blend of colours, including vivid reds, golds and purples, indicate a typical Venetian master’s palette.



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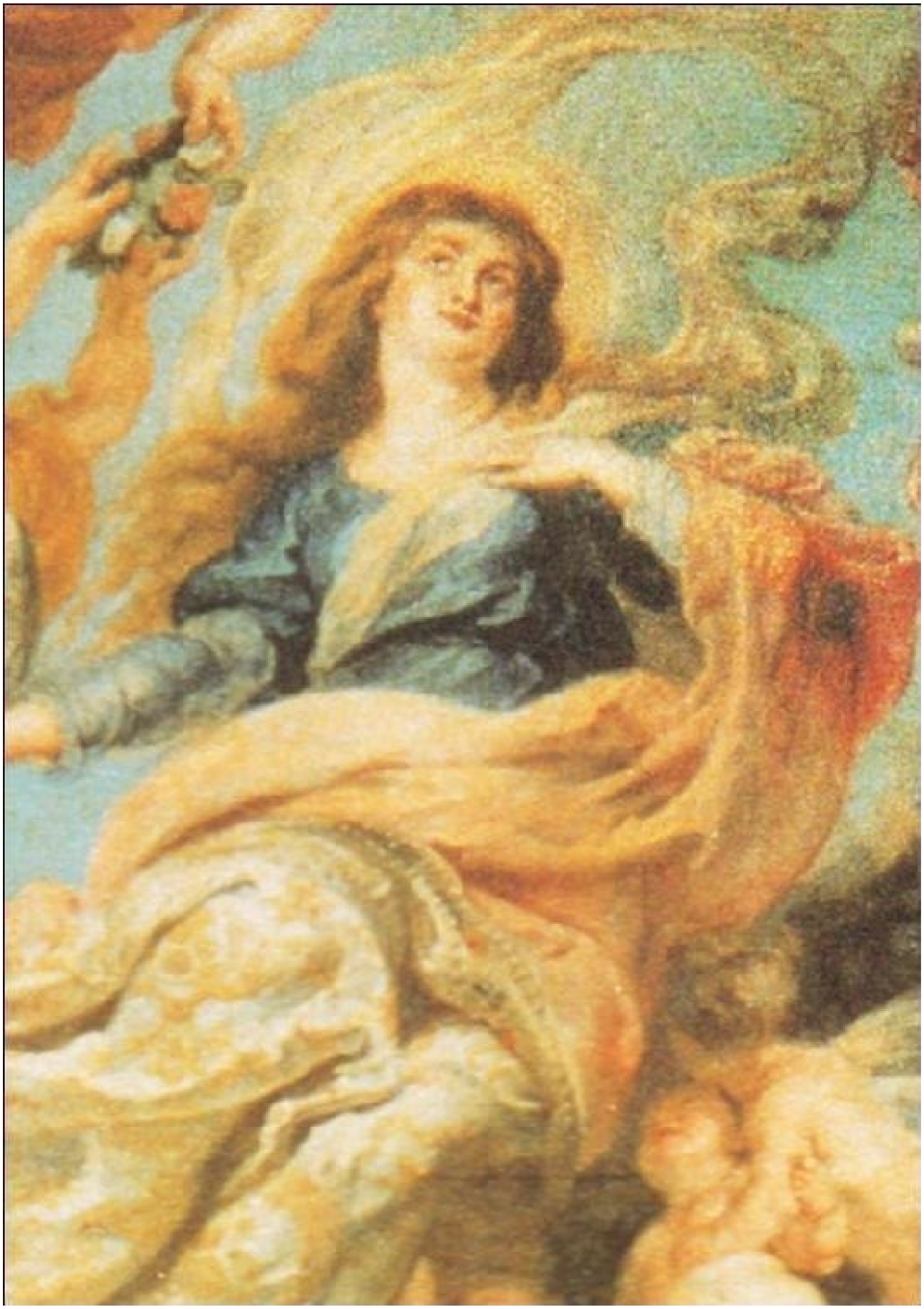

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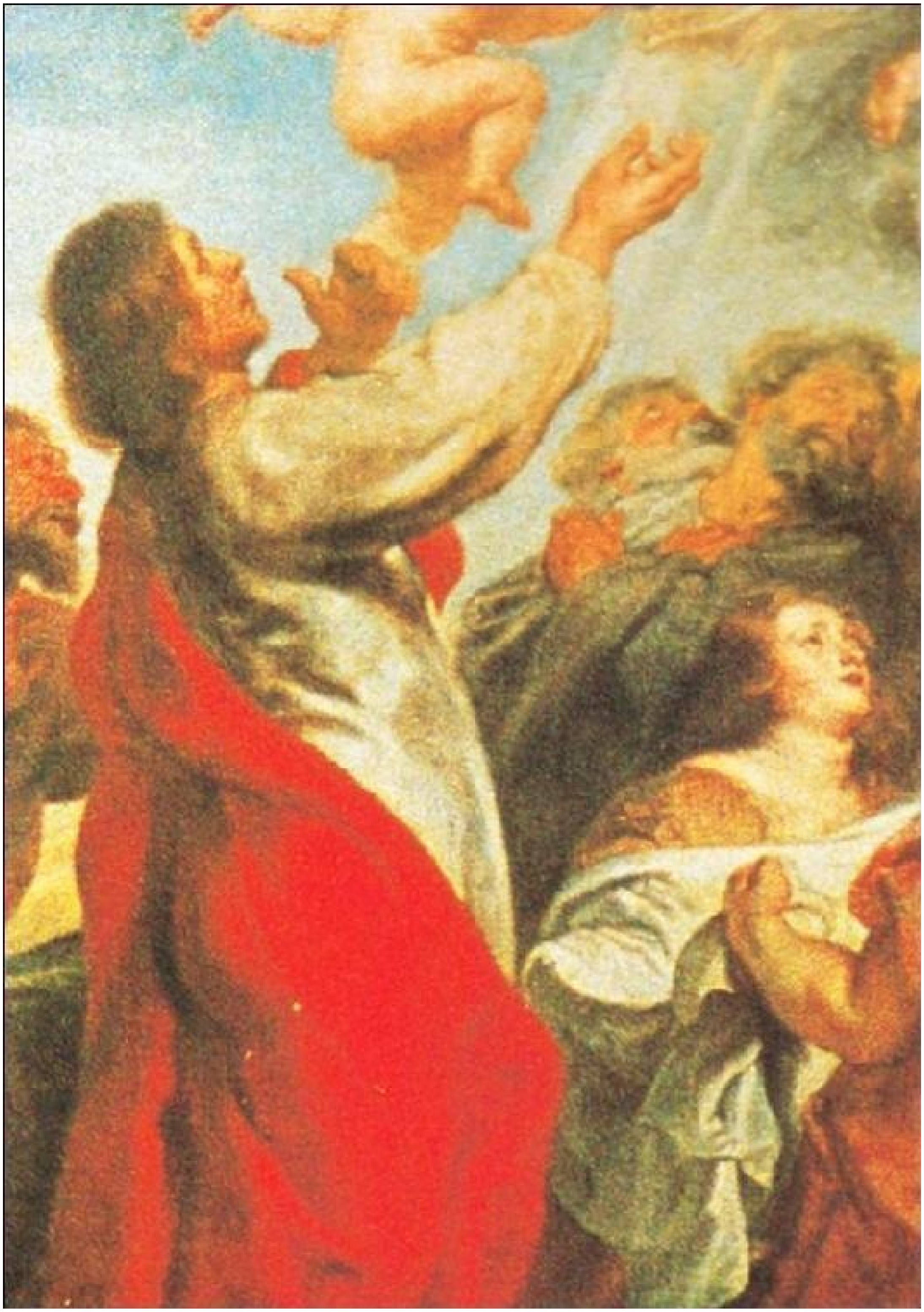

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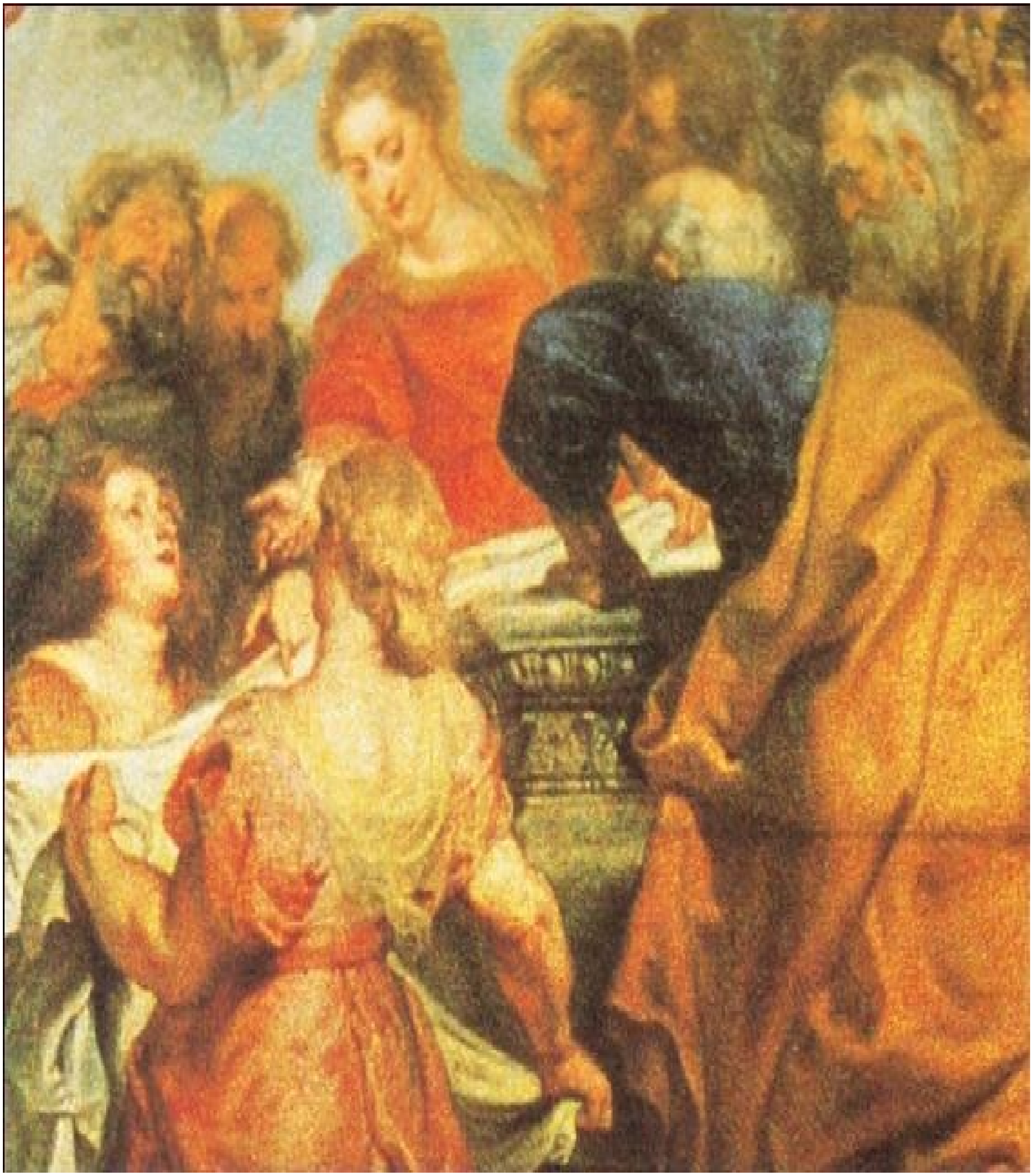

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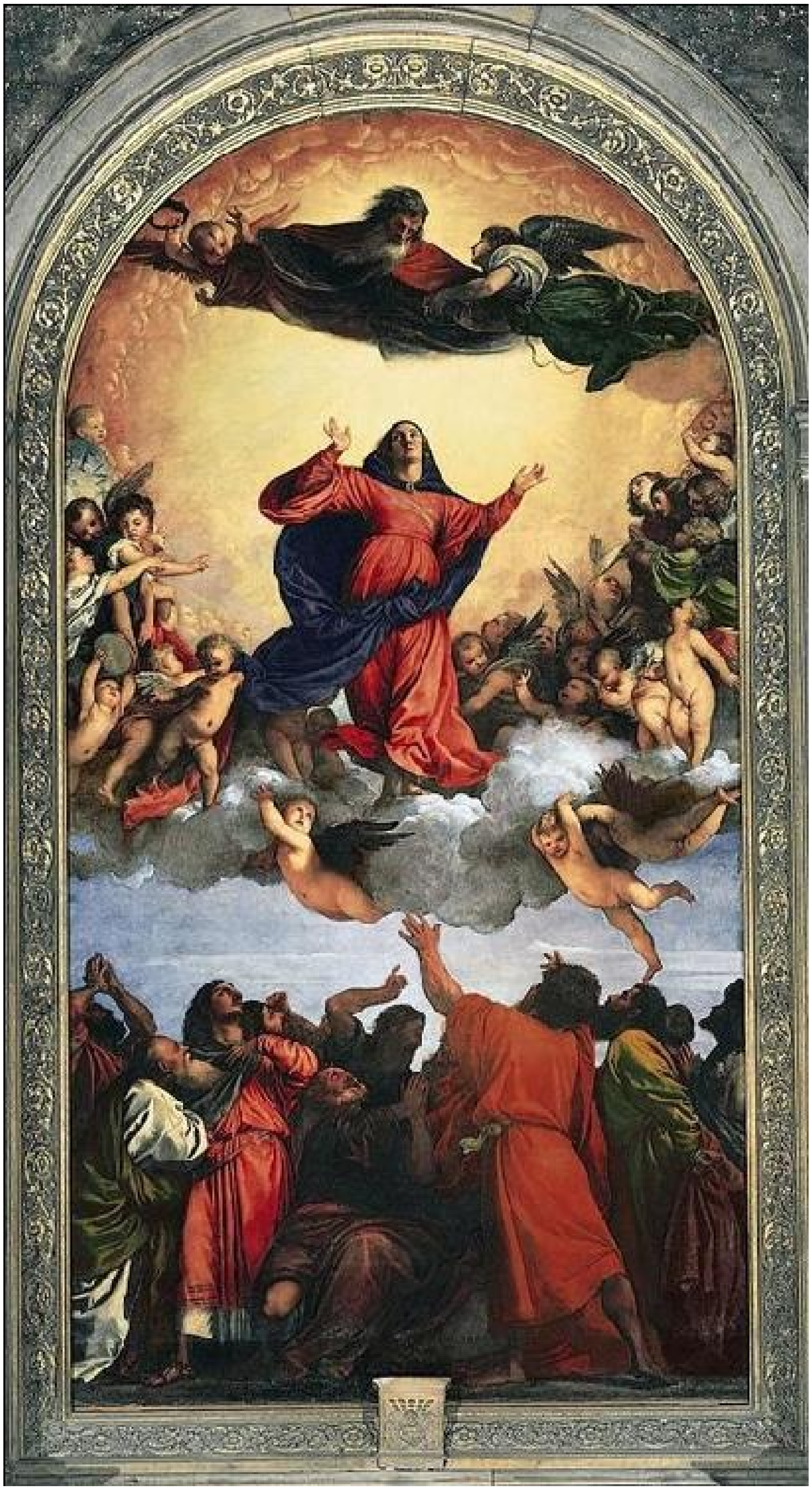
Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp



Titian's 'Assumption of the Virgin', 1518, located on the high altar in the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice

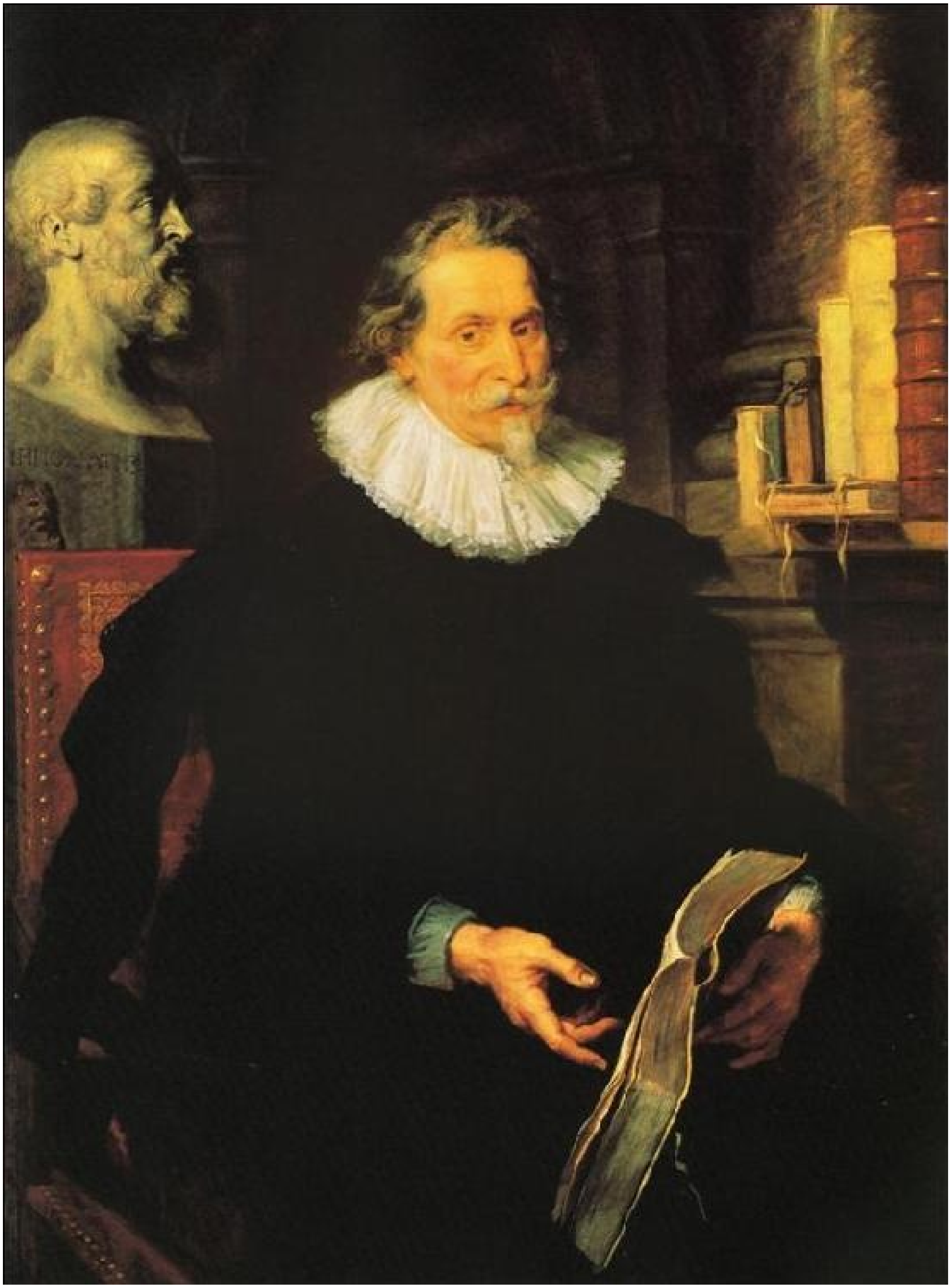
LUDOVICUS NONNIUS

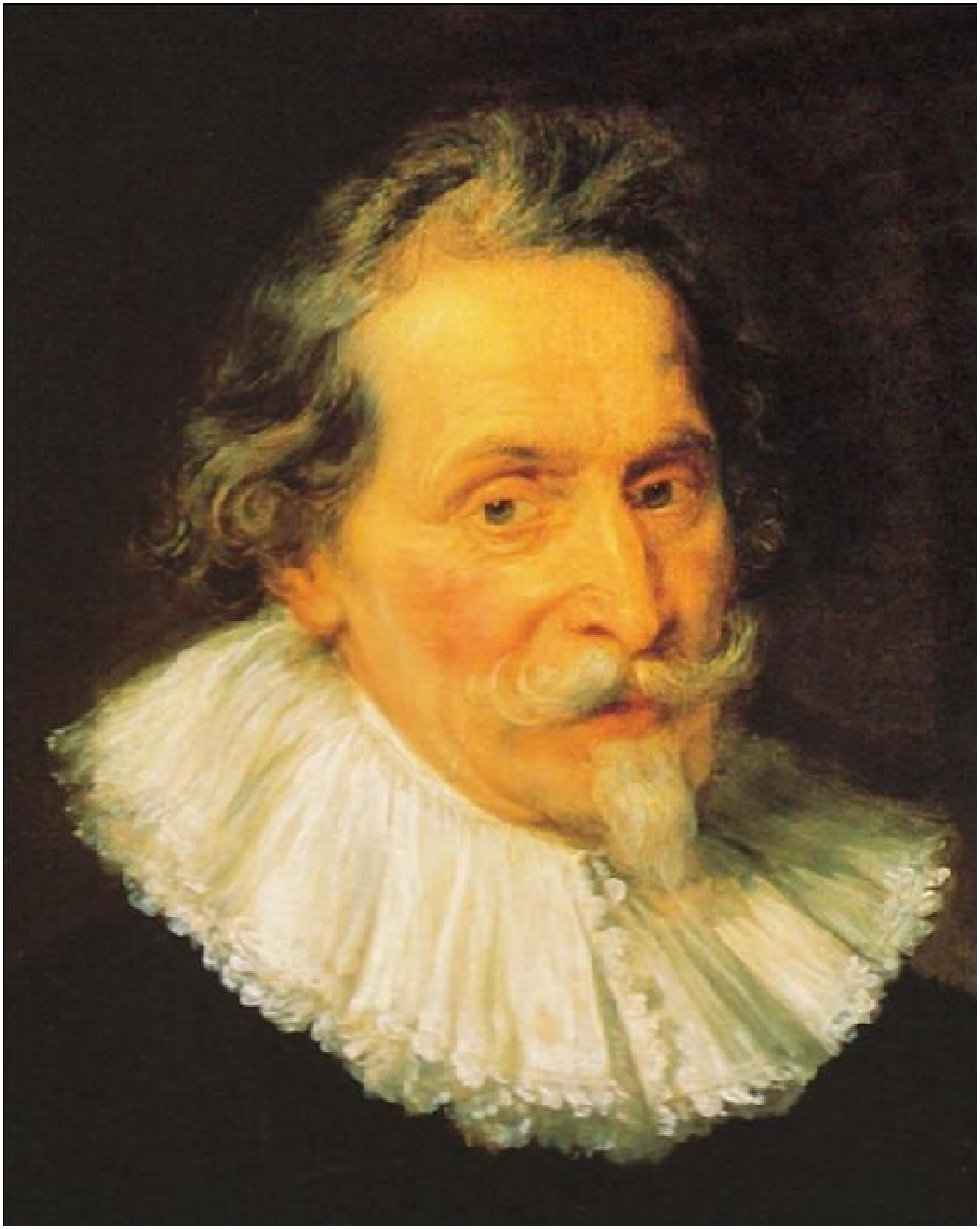
Now held in

London’s National Gallery, this 1627 portrait presents Rubens’ physician Ludovicus Nonnius, who had a successful medical practice in Antwerp and was an expert on ancient coins. Nonnius published numismatic commentaries with title pages designed by Rubens, while he also wrote medical publications, including a major work on health and diet, *Diaeteticon*, leading to groundbreaking work in food hygiene. He had been among the four doctors called to attend Rubens’ wife, Isabella Brant, prior to her death and it was likely this association that produced a close personal bond between the artist and doctor, as displayed in the canvas.

The antique

bust in the portrait is inscribed with Greek letters, indicating the name of the father of Western medicine, Hippocrates, and so informing us of the sitter’s profession. The doctor appears to briefly look up, while pointing to a passage in a book, engaging us at once with the canvas. Rubens further extends the immediacy of the portrait through the lively use of brushwork in the face and hands, contrasting effectively with the white ruff collar and cuffs. The expression of Nonnius’ eyes evoke a sense of the physician’s intelligence, reinforced by the various symbols of high learning.





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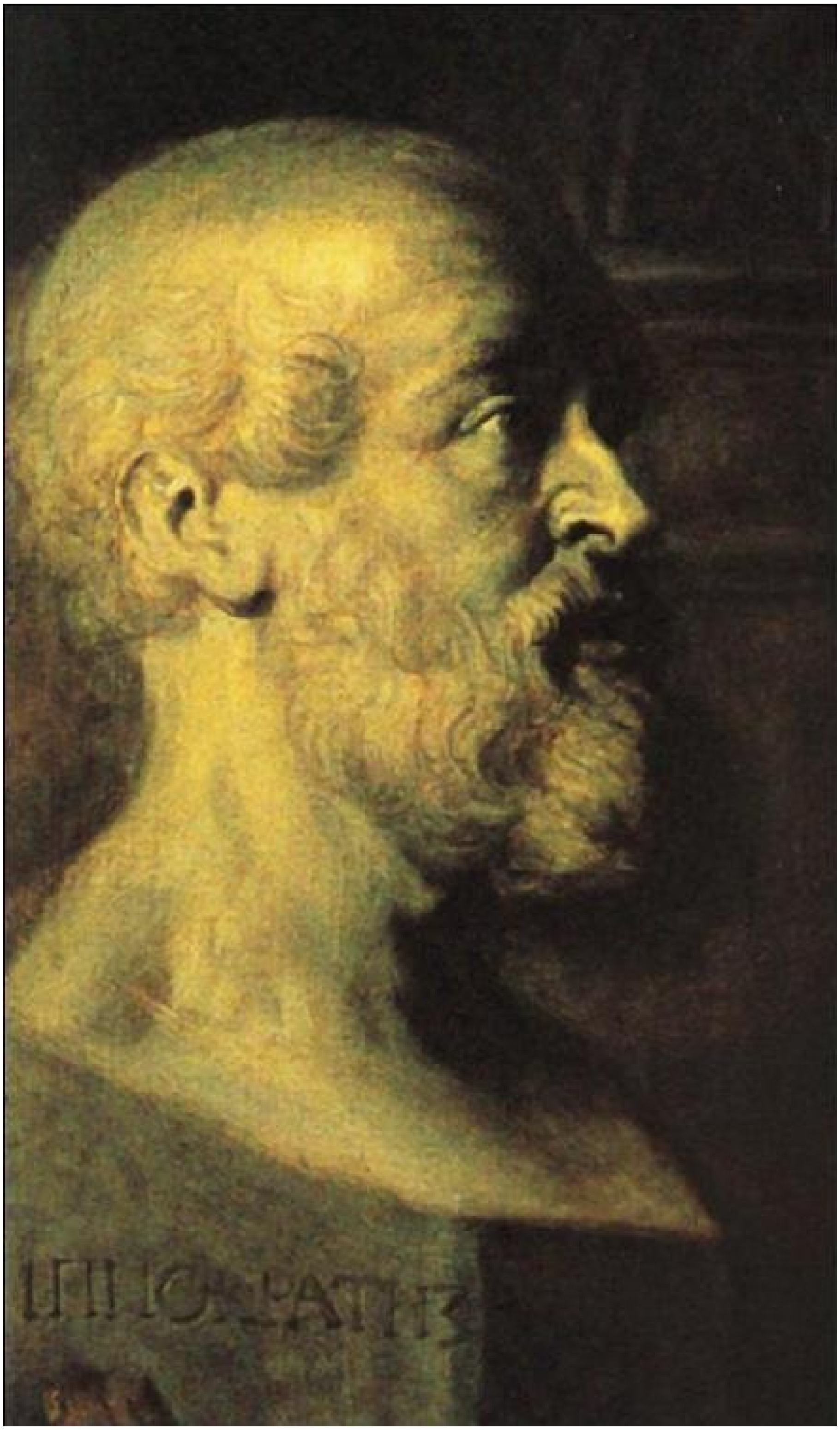
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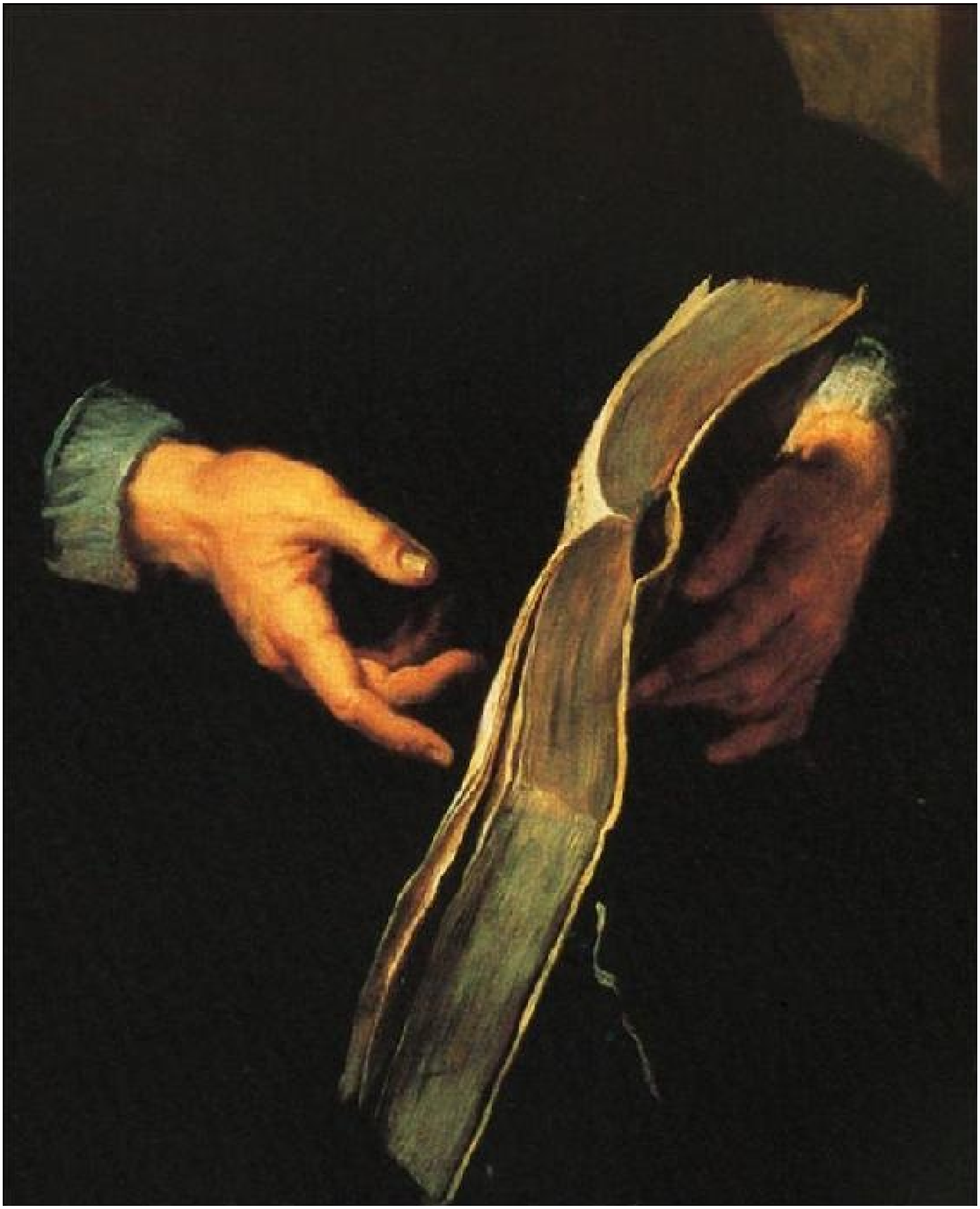

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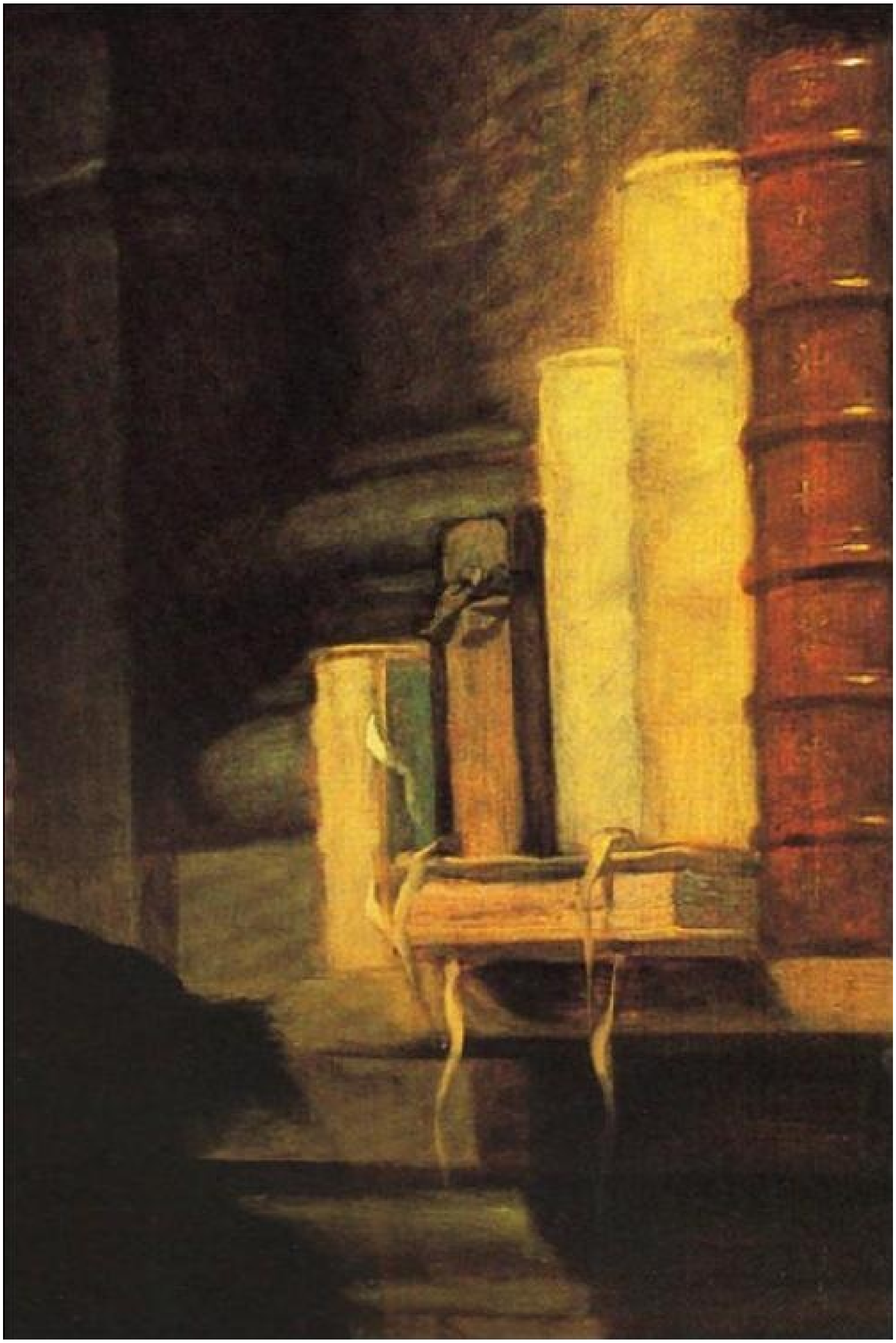

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PEACE AND WAR

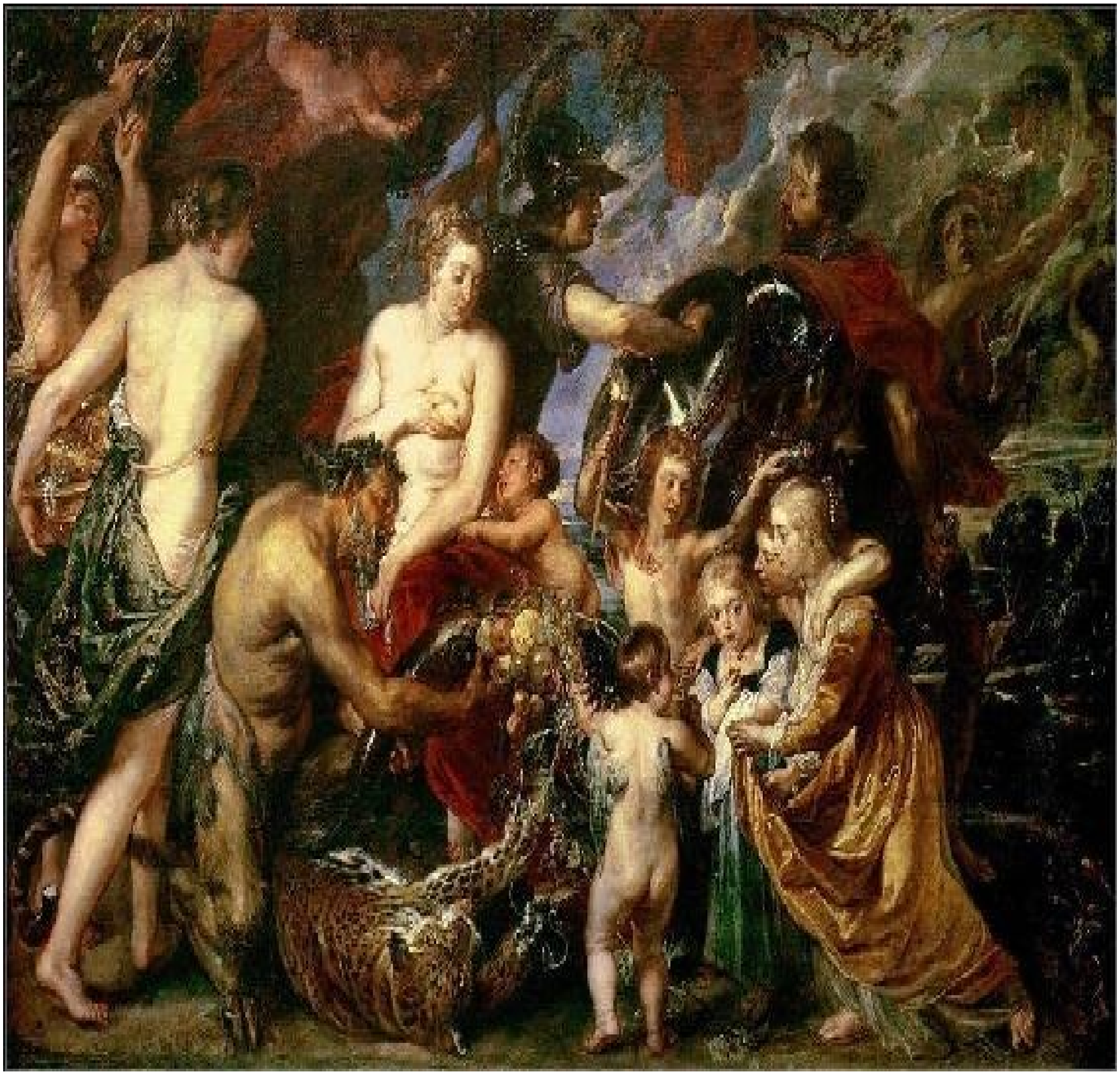
Also known as *Minerva Protects Pax from Mars*, this large and impressive canvas, now found in London’s National Gallery, was produced as an attempt to secure peace negotiations between England and Spain, when Rubens was serving in his role as envoy to Philip IV of Spain. Due to his confident demeanour and courtly manners Rubens was quick to secure the patronage of nobles, serving on many diplomatic missions — entirely outside of his sphere as an artist — throughout his life. In 1630 he presented *Peace and War* to Charles I of England, the greatest art collector of the day, as a gift and the King was delighted with the painting.

The central female figure represents the Roman goddess Pax (Peace), here in her personification as Ceres, the goddess of the earth, sharing her bounty with the various figures of the foreground. As a display of her fecundity, she is illustrated as actually squirting milk from her breast into a child’s mouth.

The children of the composition have been identified as portraits of the children of Rubens’ host, Sir Balthasar Gerbier, a painter-diplomat in the service of Charles I.

To the right of Pax is Minerva, goddess of wisdom. She drives away Mars, the god of war, and Alecto, the fury of war. A winged cupid and the goddess of marriage, Hymen, lead the children (the fruit of marriage) to a cornucopia, or horn of plenty. The satyr and leopard are part of the entourage of Bacchus, another fertility god and leopards draw Bacchus’ chariot. Two nymphs or maenads approach from the left, one bringing riches, the other dancing to a tambourine. A putto holds an olive wreath, a symbol of peace, and the caduceus (winged staff) of Mercury, messenger of the gods.

It is a picture of two halves, with the joys and benefits of peace celebrated in brilliant colour in the foreground, as a winged cupid and the goddess of marriage colour in the foreground, as a winged cupid and the goddess of marriage, Hymen, lead the children (the fruits of marriage) to concord. Yet, in the background of the image, the horrors and mindlessness of war are starkly depicted in gloomy hues. It is the terrifying face of Alecto, the fury of war, in the right of the canvas that strongly underlines terror of war.



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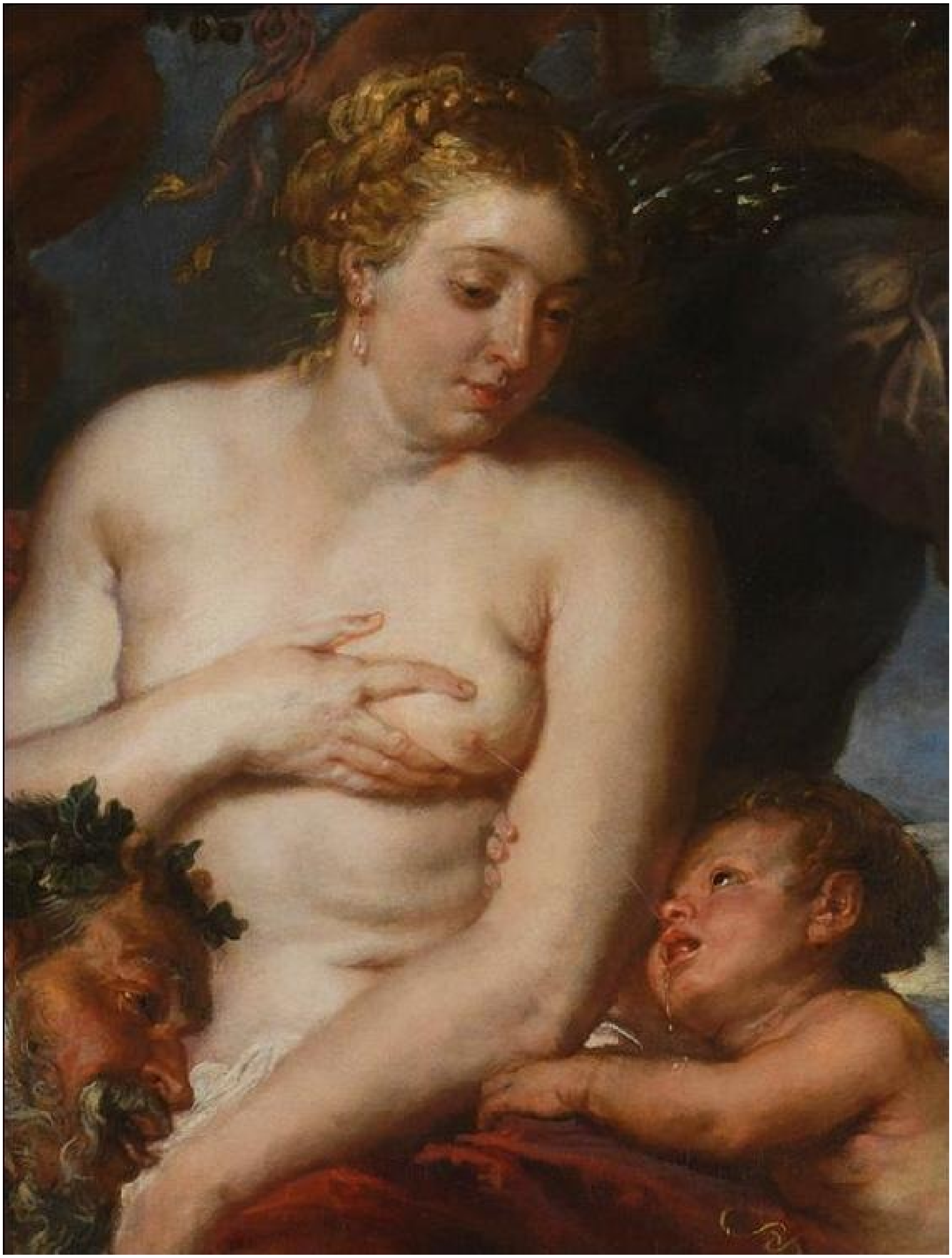

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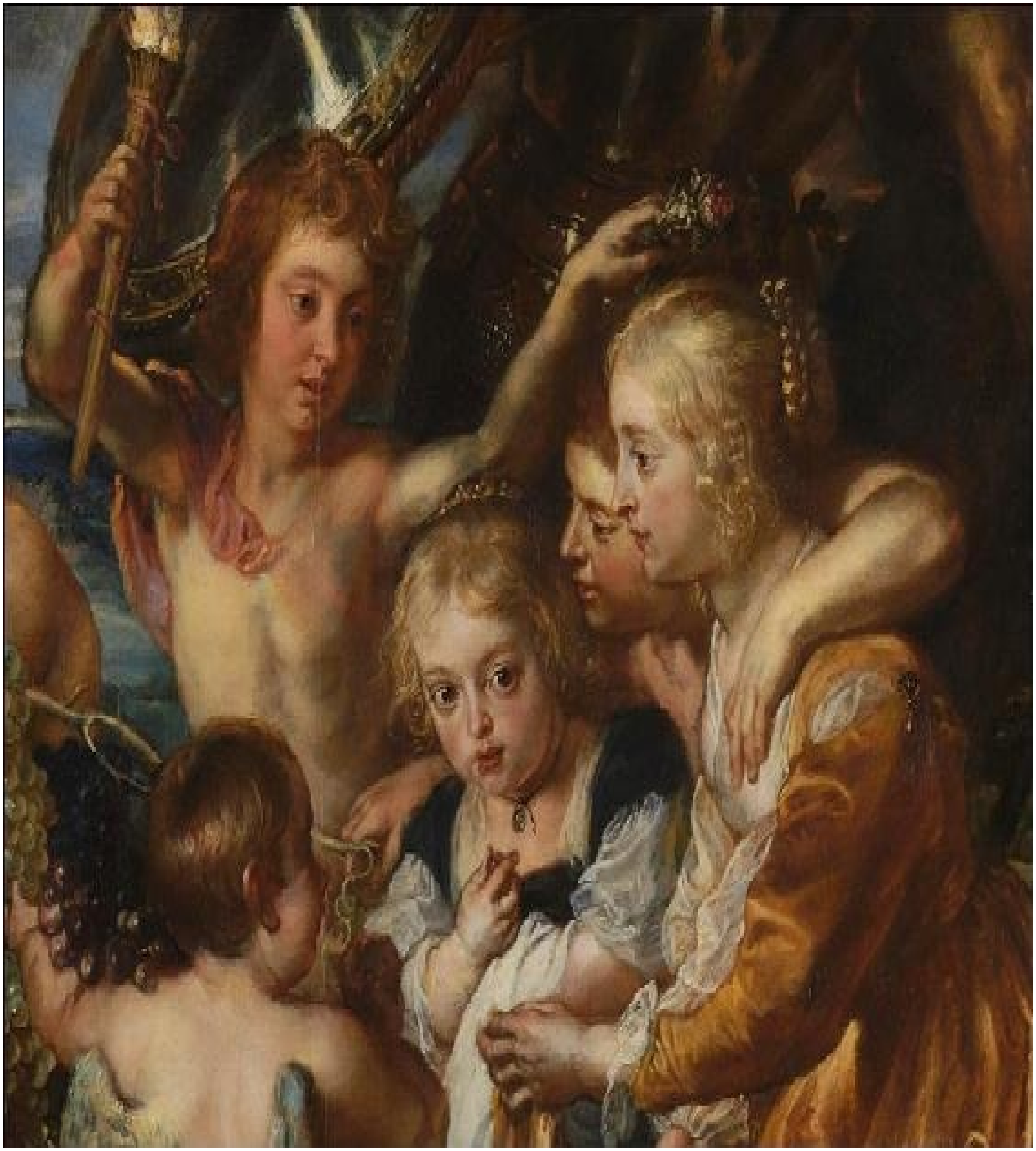

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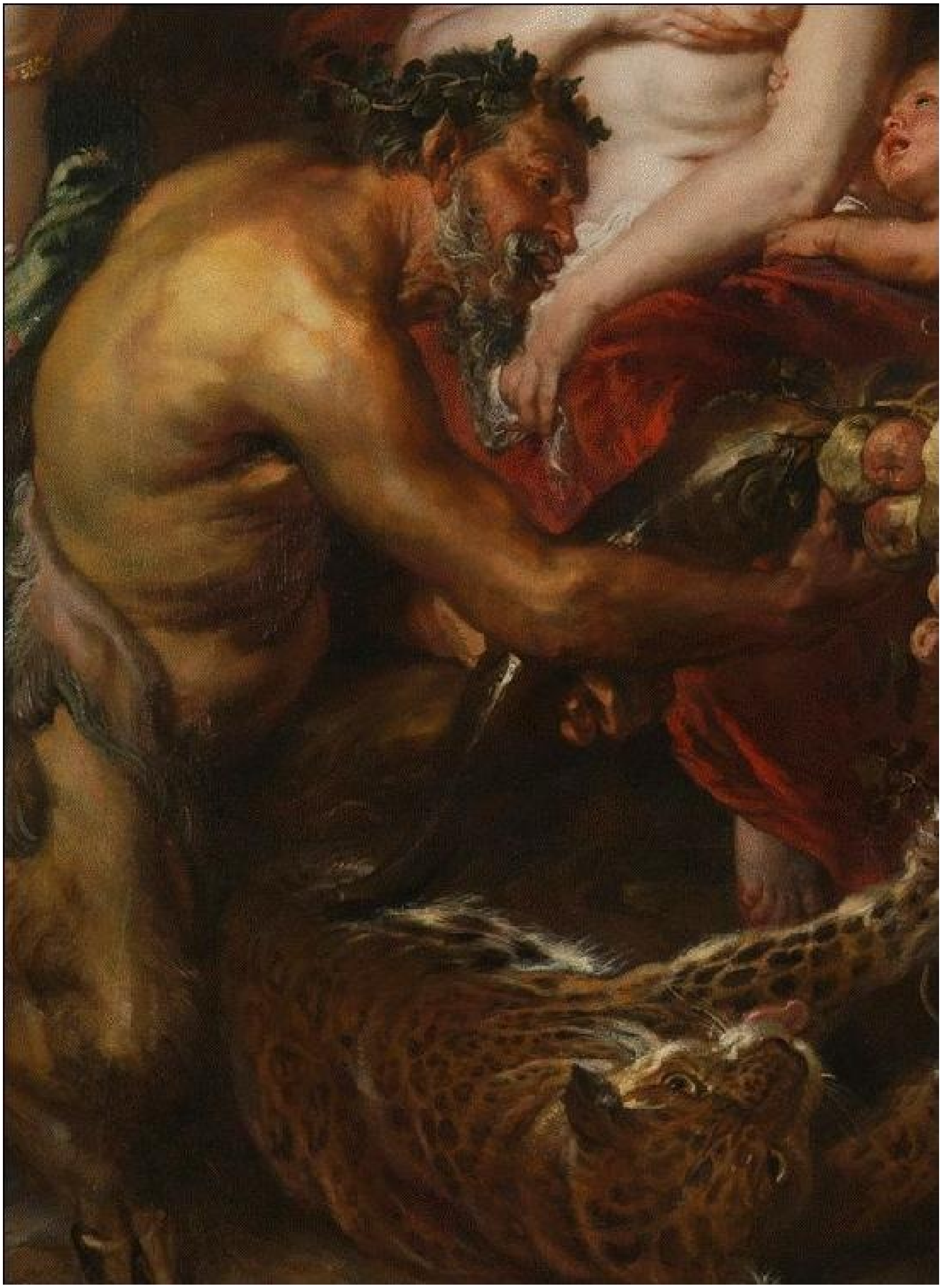

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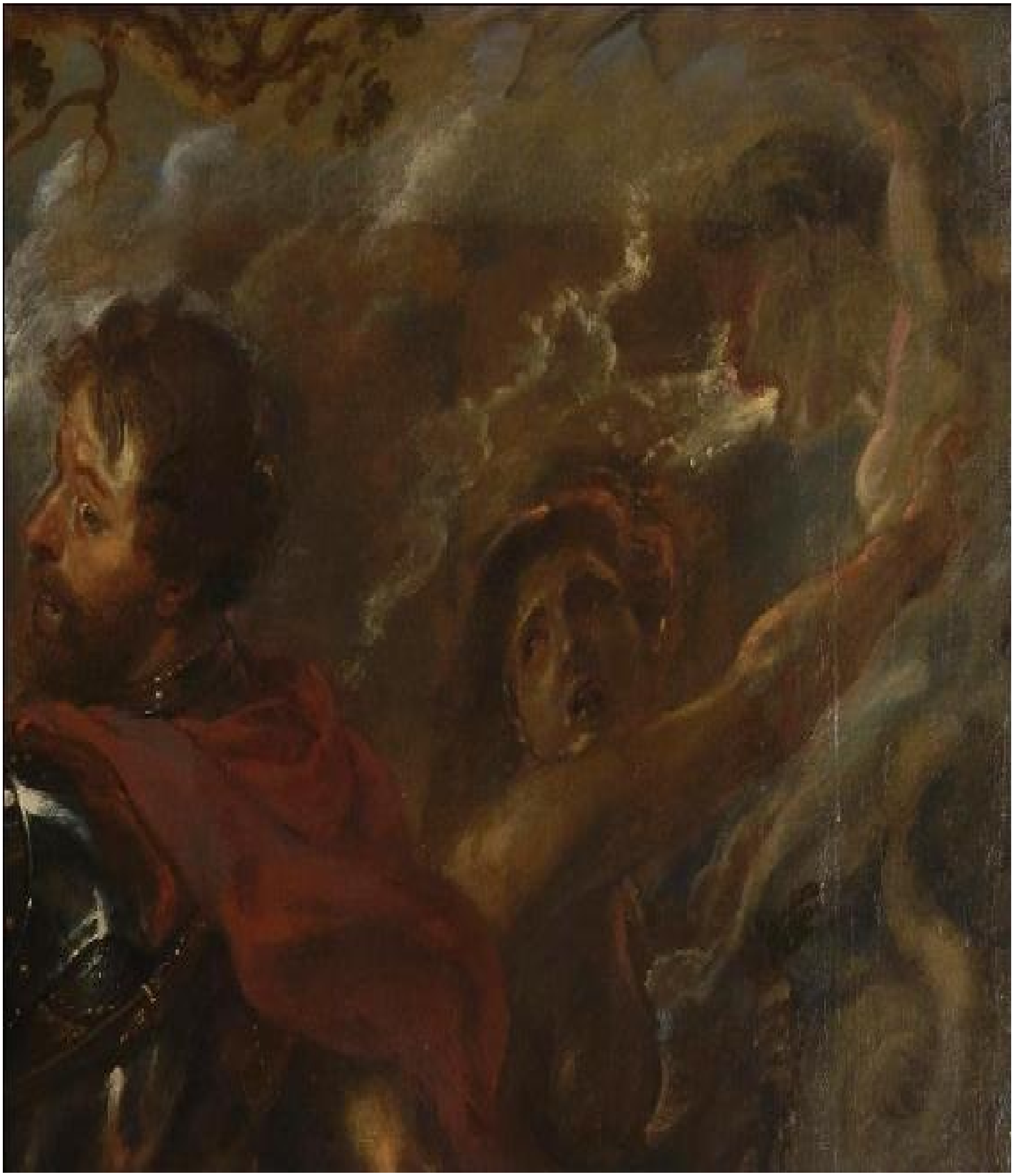

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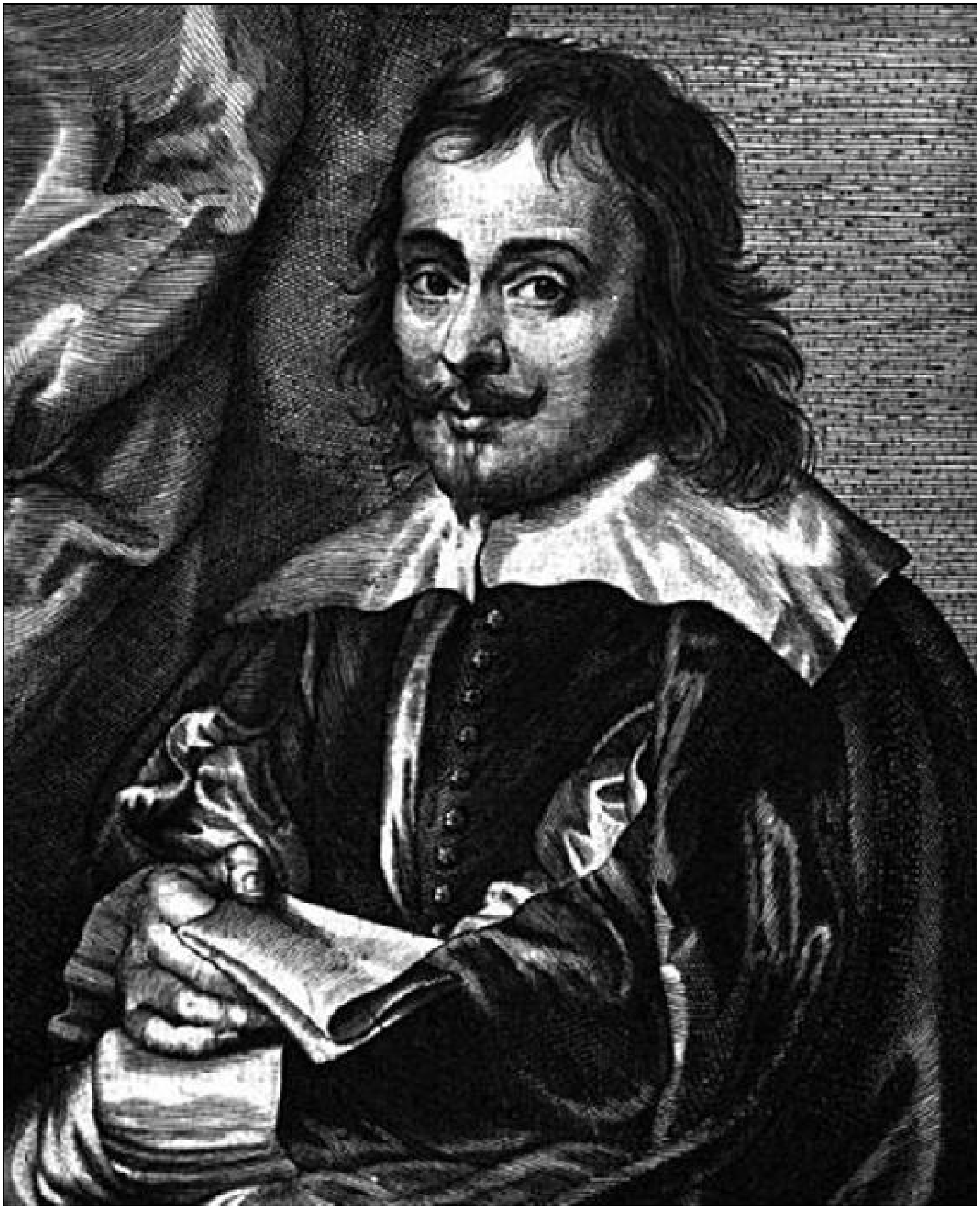


Rubens' host in England, Sir Balthasar Gerbier (1592-1663) was an Anglo-Dutch courtier, diplomat, art advisor, miniaturist and architectural designer.

advisor, miniaturist and architectural designer.

THE GARDEN OF LOVE

Completed in

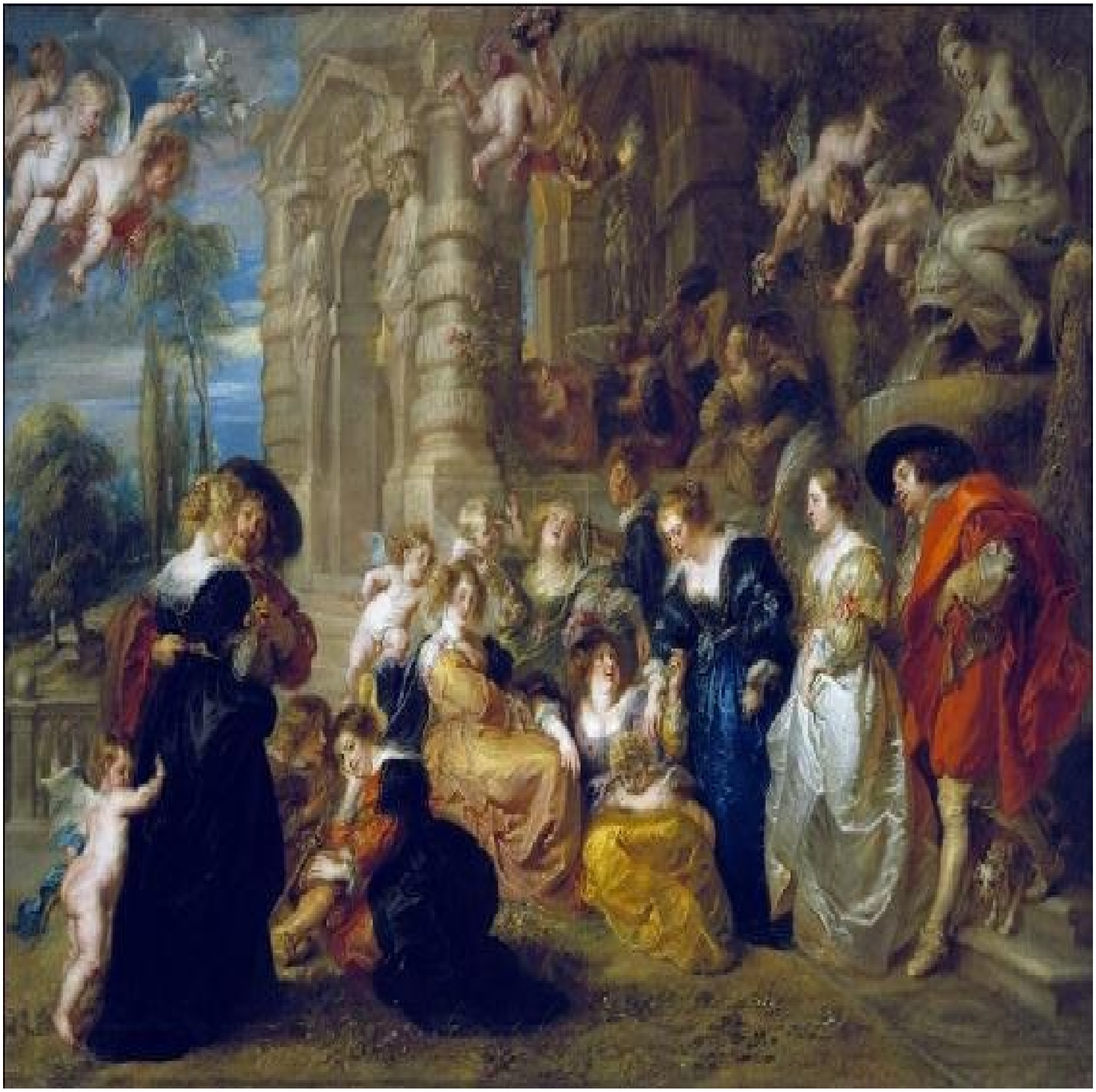
1632 and housed in Madrid’s Museo del Prado, *The Garden of Love* was painted immediately following Rubens’

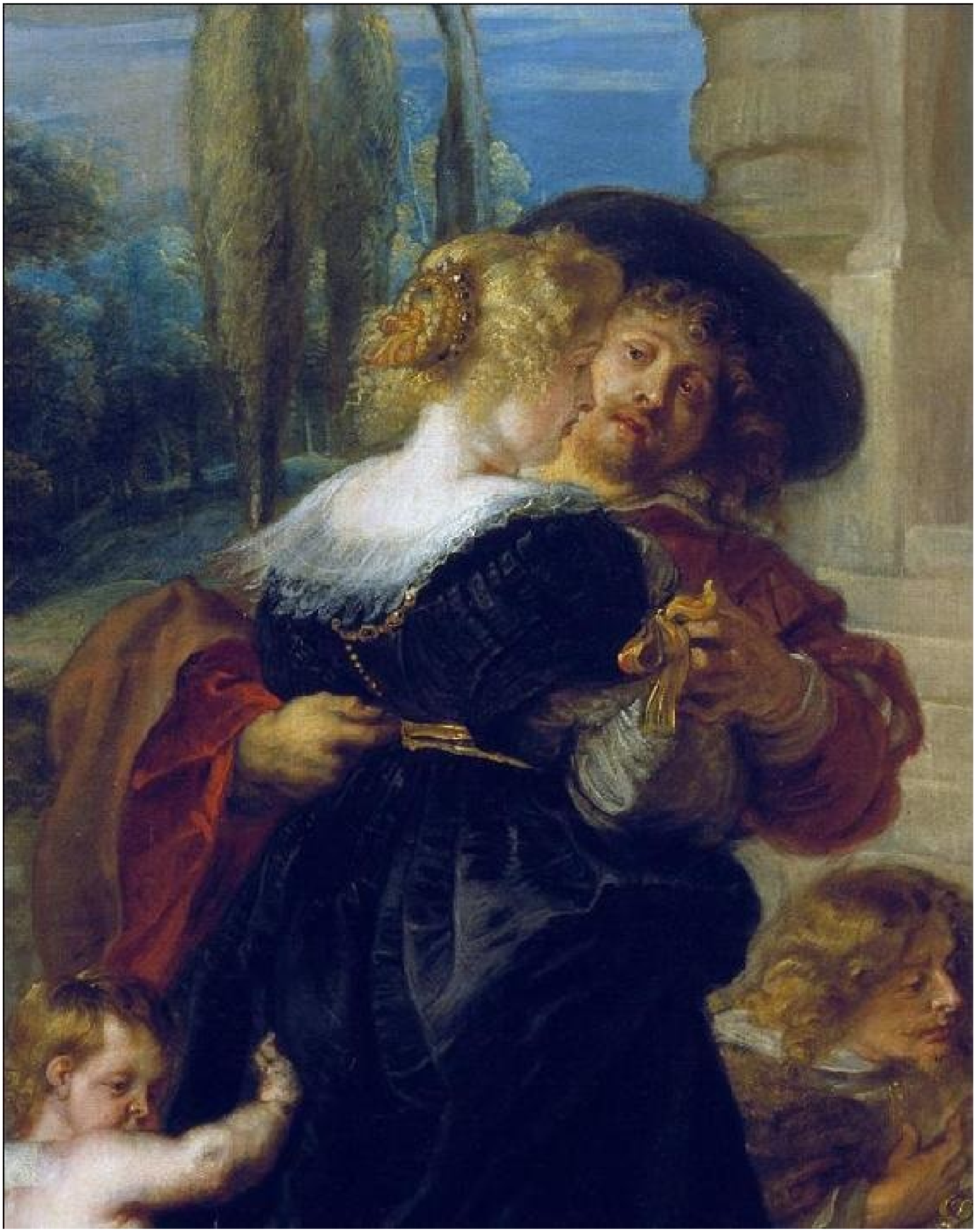
marriage to Helena Fourment to celebrate their union. The painting presents a complex allegory of the theme of love, evoking numerous interpretations from art scholars since its first unveiling.

On a surface level, it depicts a lavish garden party, with Rubens and his sixteen-year-old bride on the left, accompanied by her sisters and brothers-in-law. However, other commentators have indentified a Neoplatonic allegory of love, charting a woman’s initiation into the three stages of love, as portrayed by the three seated women. The stages of love include sensual, earthly and celestial love, as various aspects of love are presented in the composition. Other critics judge *The Garden of* Love as a visual display of the mores of social gallantry and aristocratic courtship.

The theme of

love, of course, dominates the canvas, with the iconography of apposite sculptures placed throughout the scene. On the right a sculpture of the goddess Venus, sitting on a dolphin, watches the new union, with an almost demonic expression on her face, while her breasts serve as watering fountains. Standing at the opposite end of the composition, Venus’ son Cupid, the god of love, urges the newly-wed couple forward. In the obscured grotto, unexpected splashes of water surprise the embracing couples. A group statue of the Three Graces adds a sense of culture to an otherwise risqué scene.





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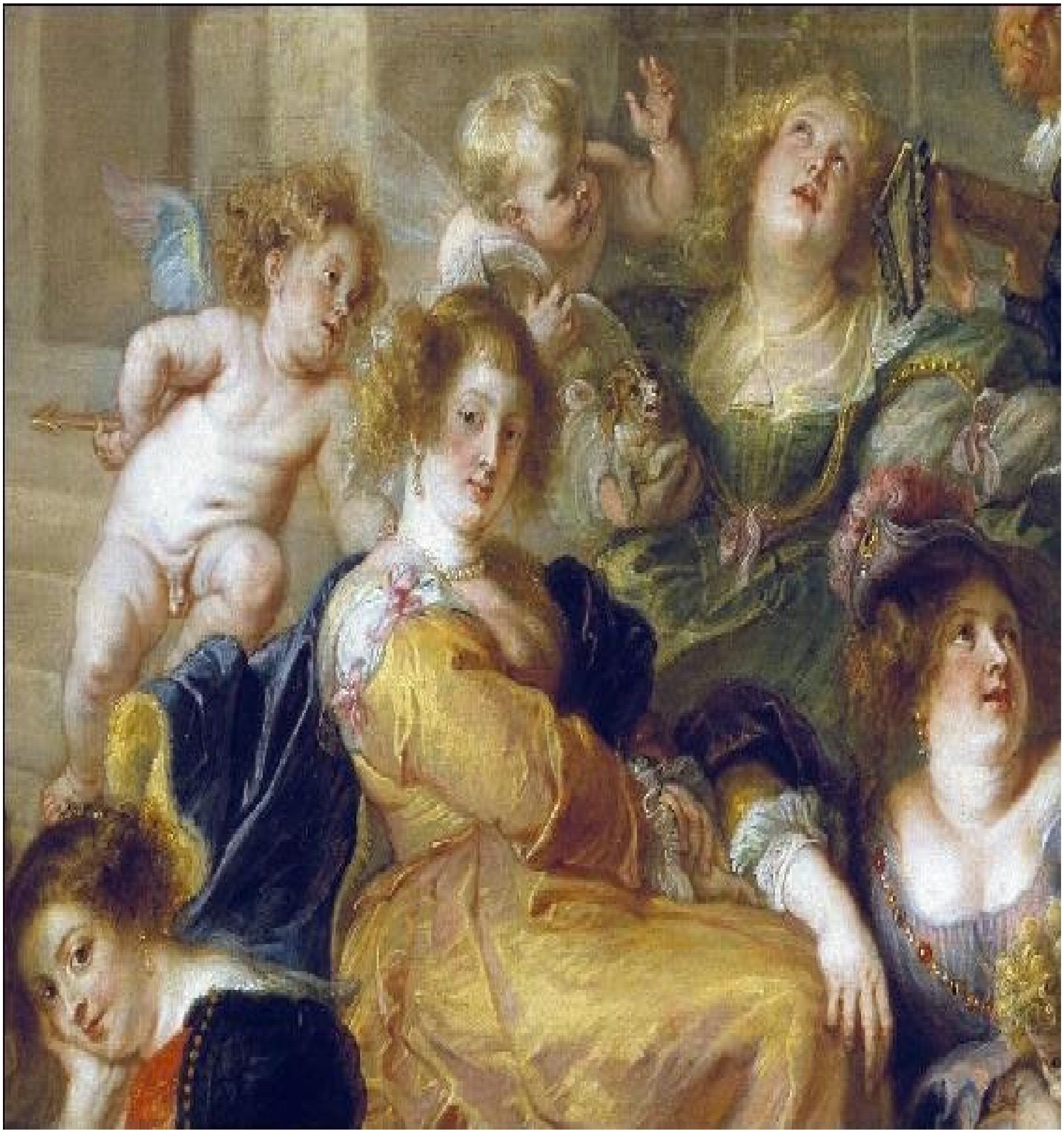

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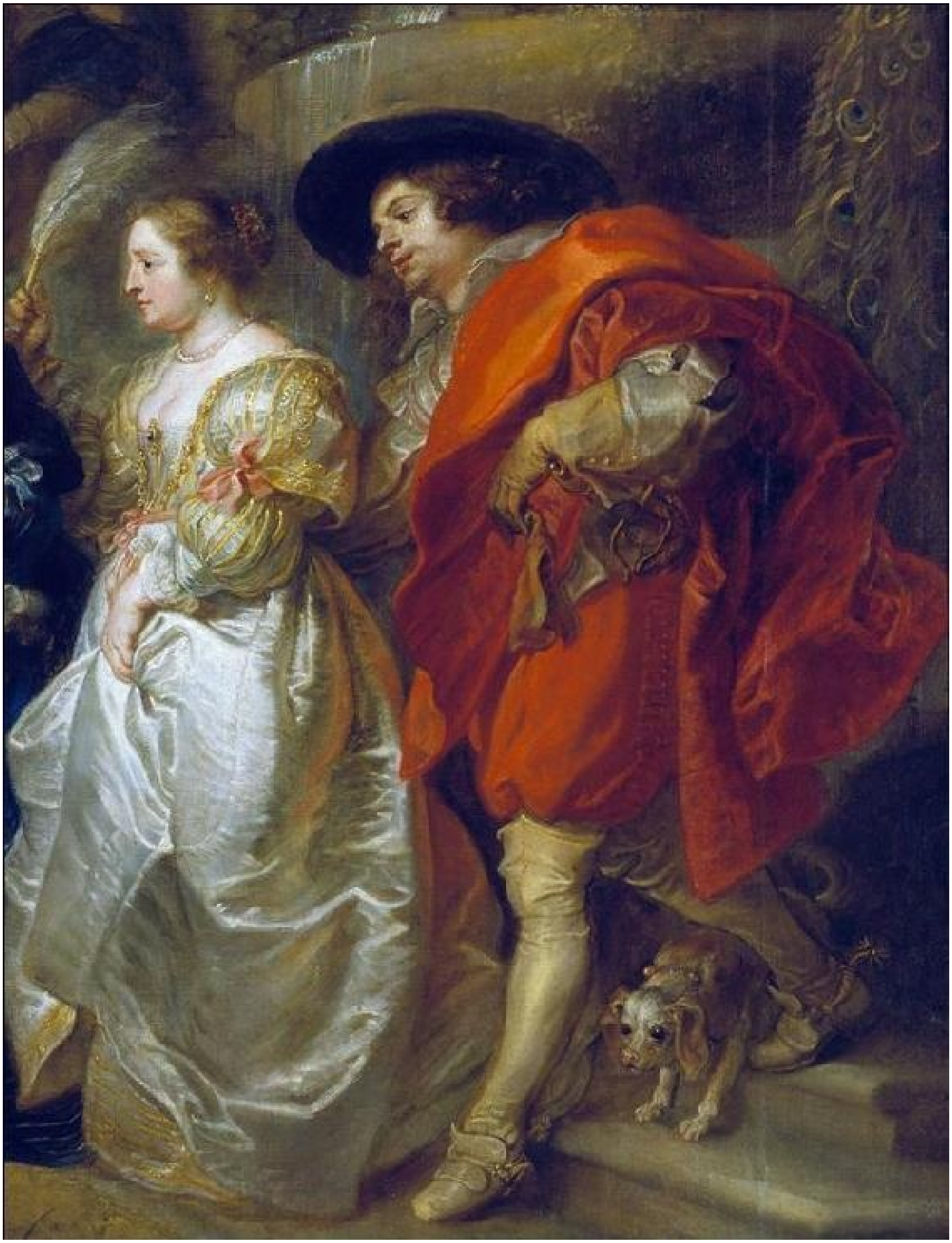

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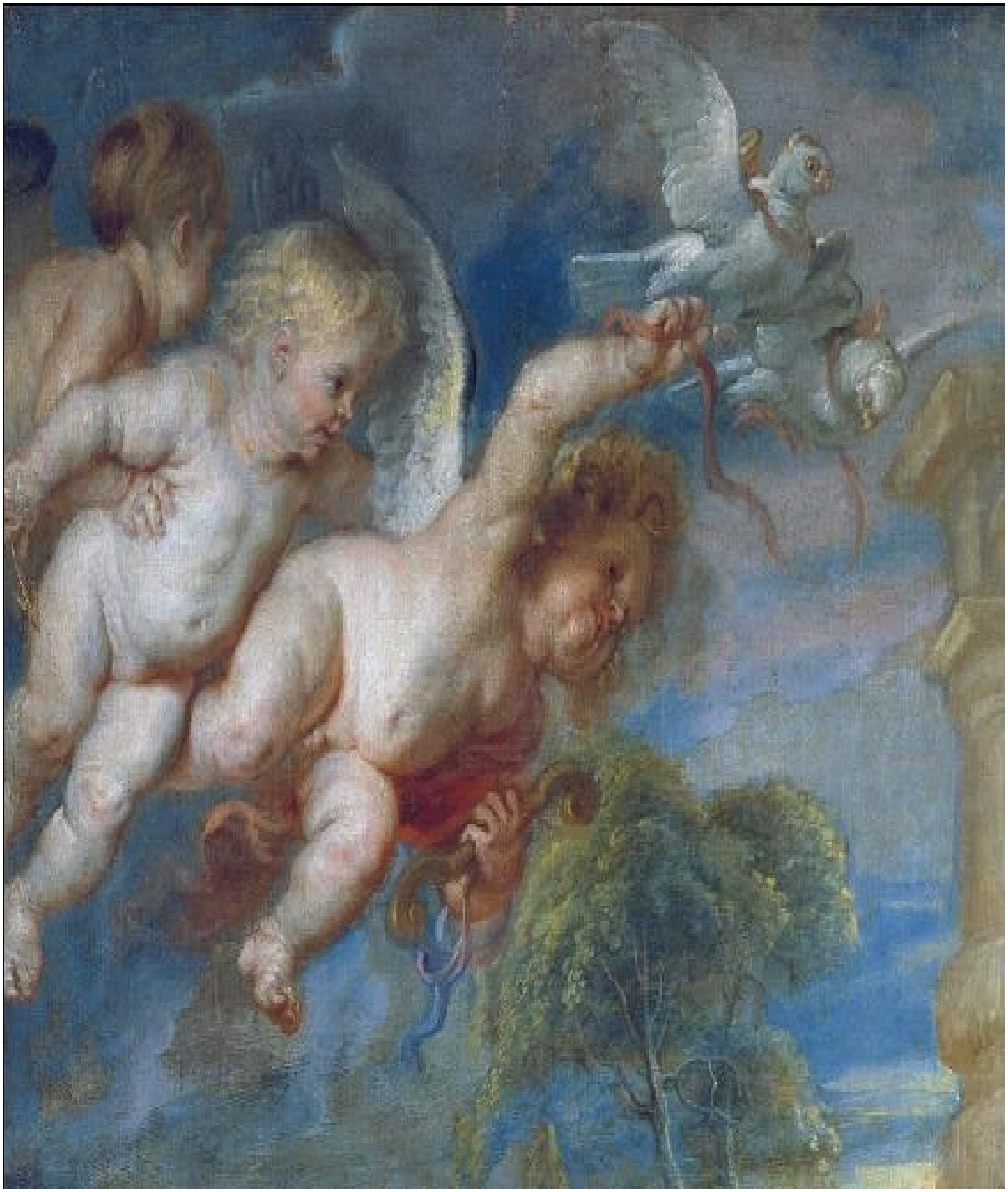

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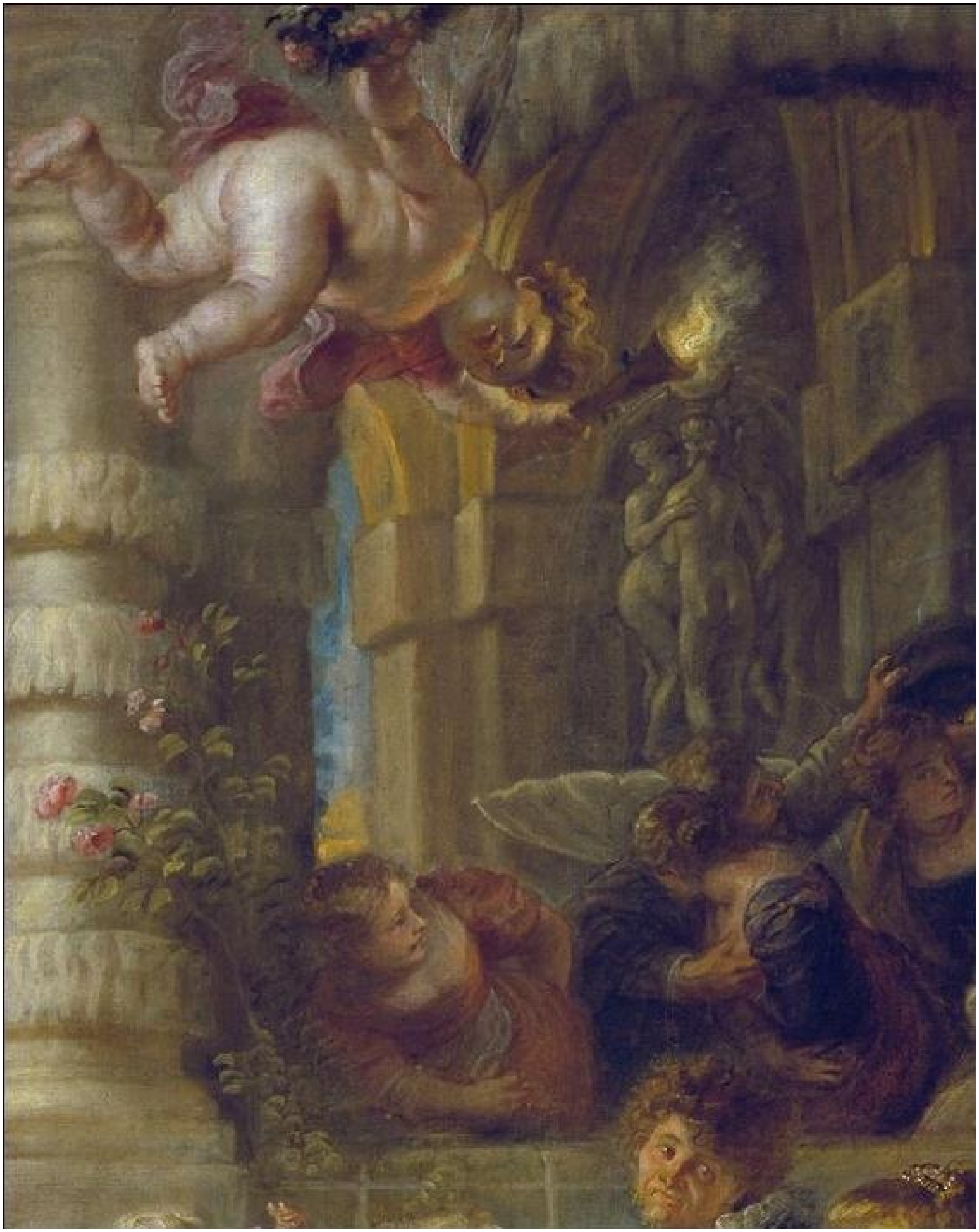

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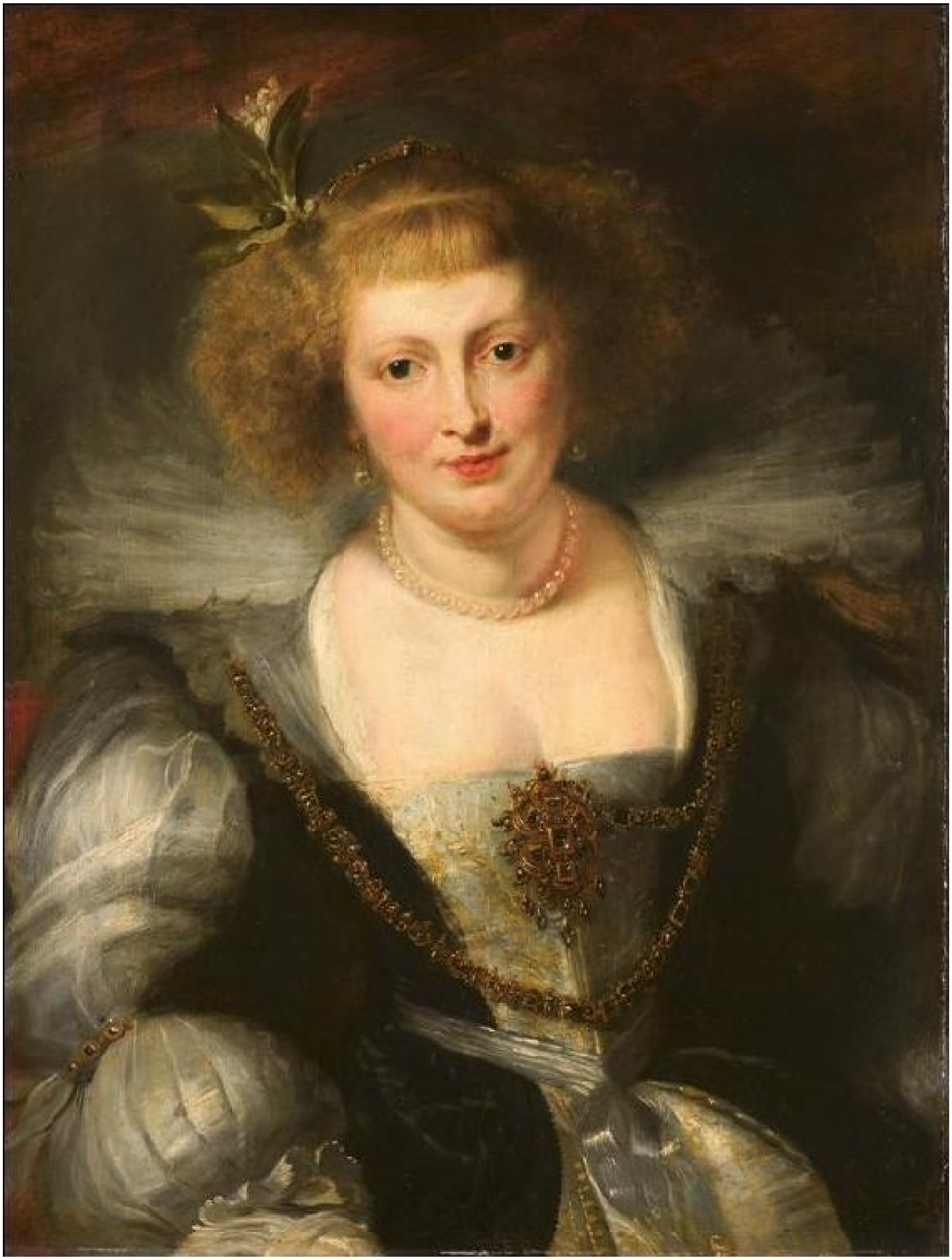


‘Helena Fourment in her Wedding Dress’ by Rubens’ Workshop, c. 1630 — Hélène Fourment married Rubens on 6 December 1630. when she was 16 years old and he was 53.

VENUS AND ADONIS

The mythical

story of Venus and Adonis was popularised by the Roman poet Ovid’s *Metamorphoses,* featuring in Book 10 of the epic poem and later made famous by Shakespeare in his long poem. Ovid’s tale narrates how the goddess of love Venus seduced the beautiful Adonis as her first mortal lover. They lived as long-time companions, with the goddess hunting alongside her lover. According to the myth, one day she warns Adonis of the tale of Atalanta and Hippomenes, wishing to dissuade him from hunting dangerous animals, but he disregards the warning and is subsequently killed by a boar.

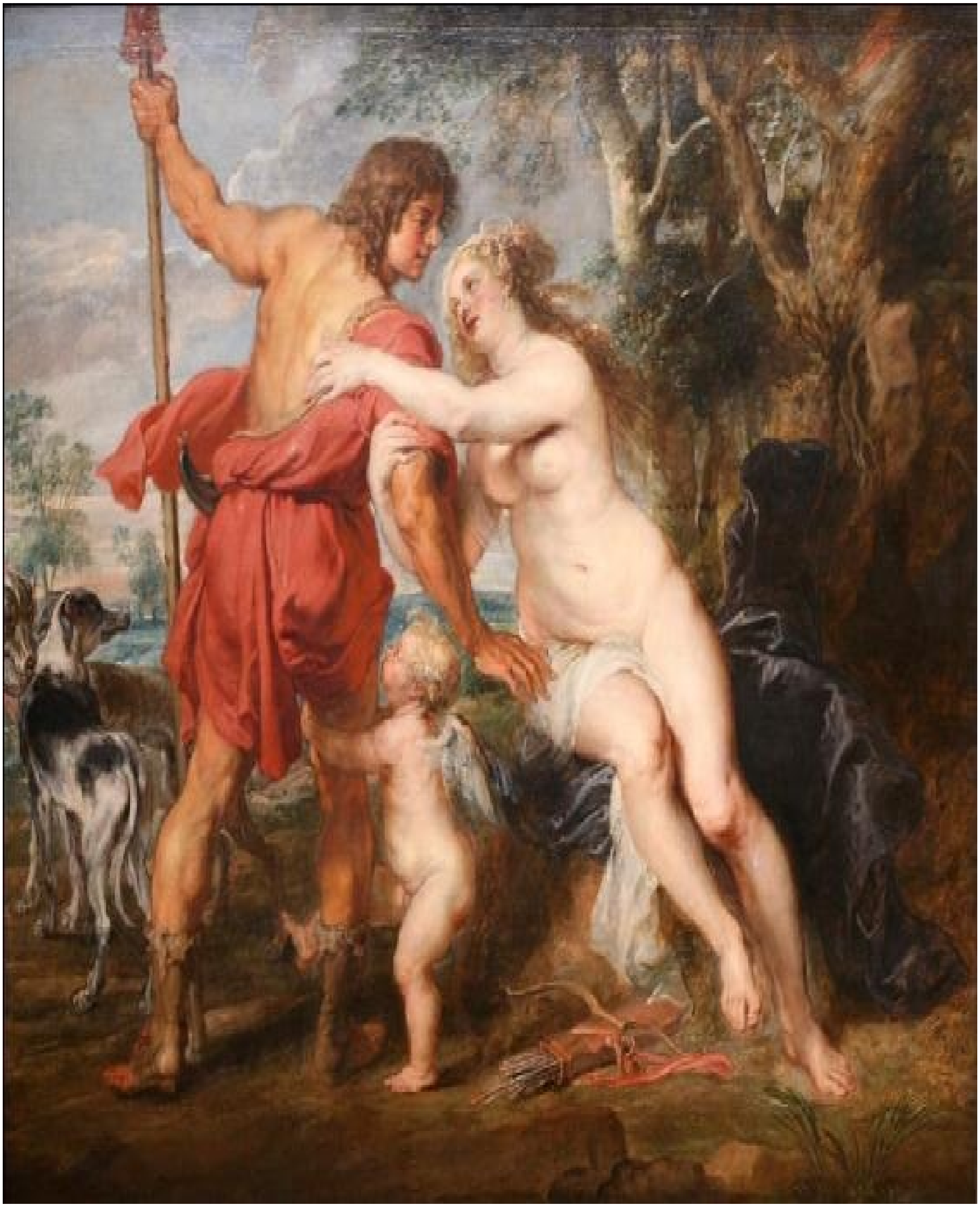
Rubens’ 1635

treatment of the story, now held in New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art as a gift from Harry Payne Bingham, demonstrates the artist’s career-long fascination with the grand Venetian colourist Titian. Rubens admired his Italian predecessor’s technique of shimmering pigments, comprising small patches of intense colour and broken brush strokes, suggesting a lifelike mosaic. Titian’s own interpretation of the *Venus and Adonis* story represents the scene of the lovers’ emotional parting, as Venus strives to deter her young lover from the tragic hunt. Rubens originally made a copy of Titian’s 1554 painting, now lost, though his admiration for the original image is faithfully preserved in the following plate, which he painted several years after making the copy.

In the

composition, Venus glances pleadingly into Adonis’ eyes, as her flowing blond hair adds to the dramatic tension of the scene. The muscle-clad and darker hued Adonis, dressed in a garish red tunic, is presented like an impressive Greek sculpture, turning his back to the viewer.

As Adonis looks down, extending his right arm in a gesture of comfort to his lover, his other arm firmly grips his spear ready for the hunt. Amusingly, Venus’ son, the little Cupid, seizes his leg in a vain attempt to thwart his departure.



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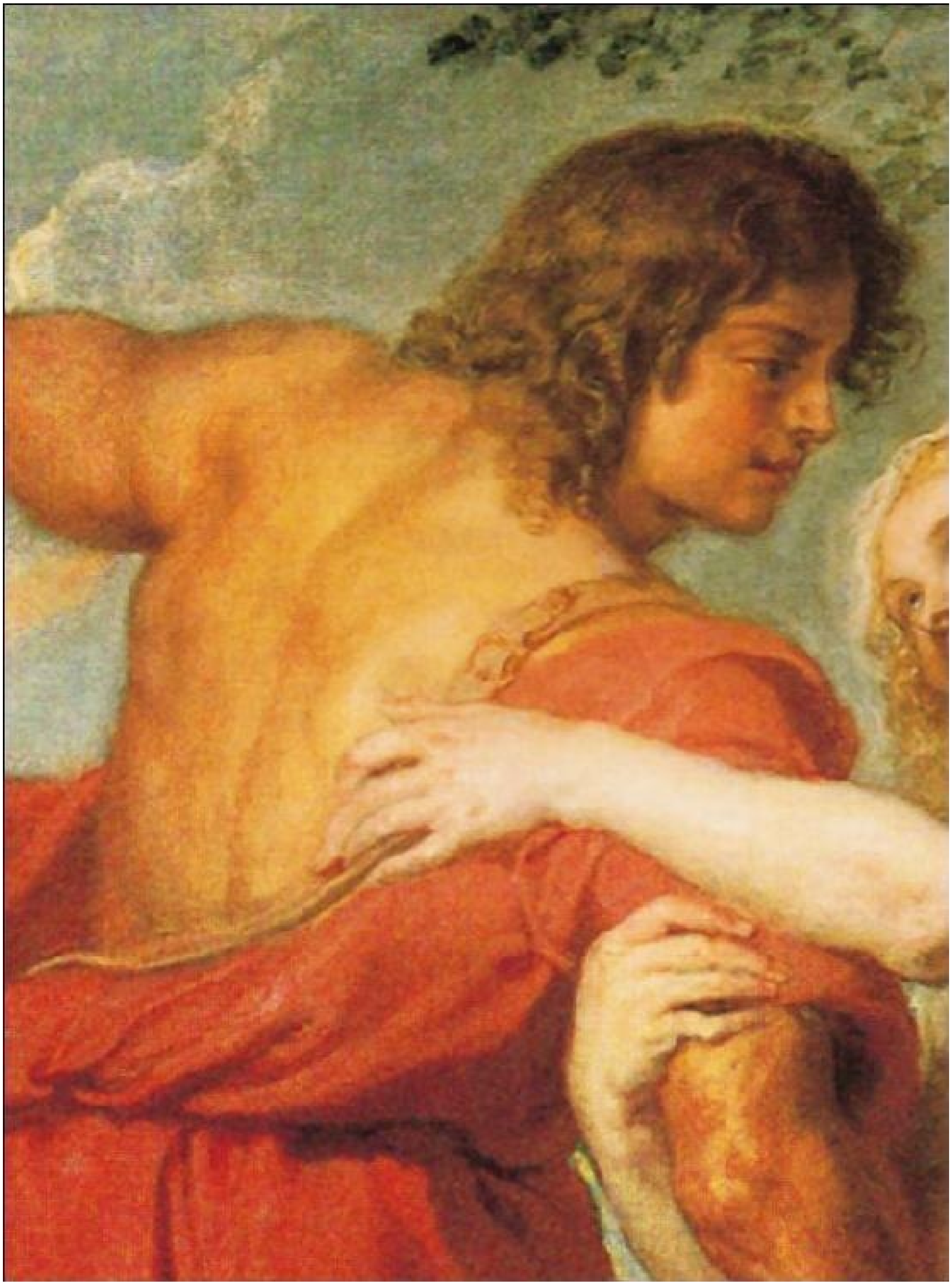

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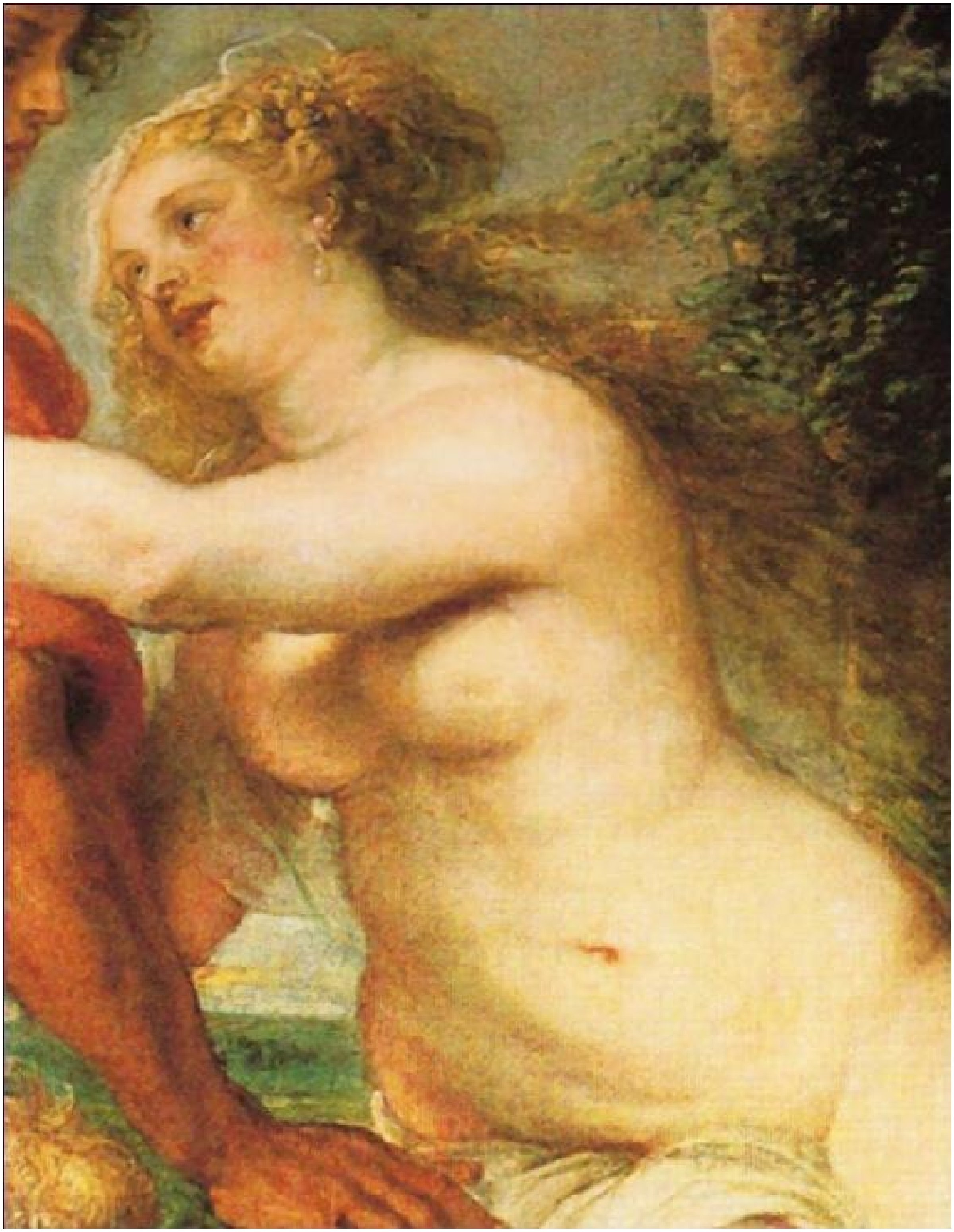

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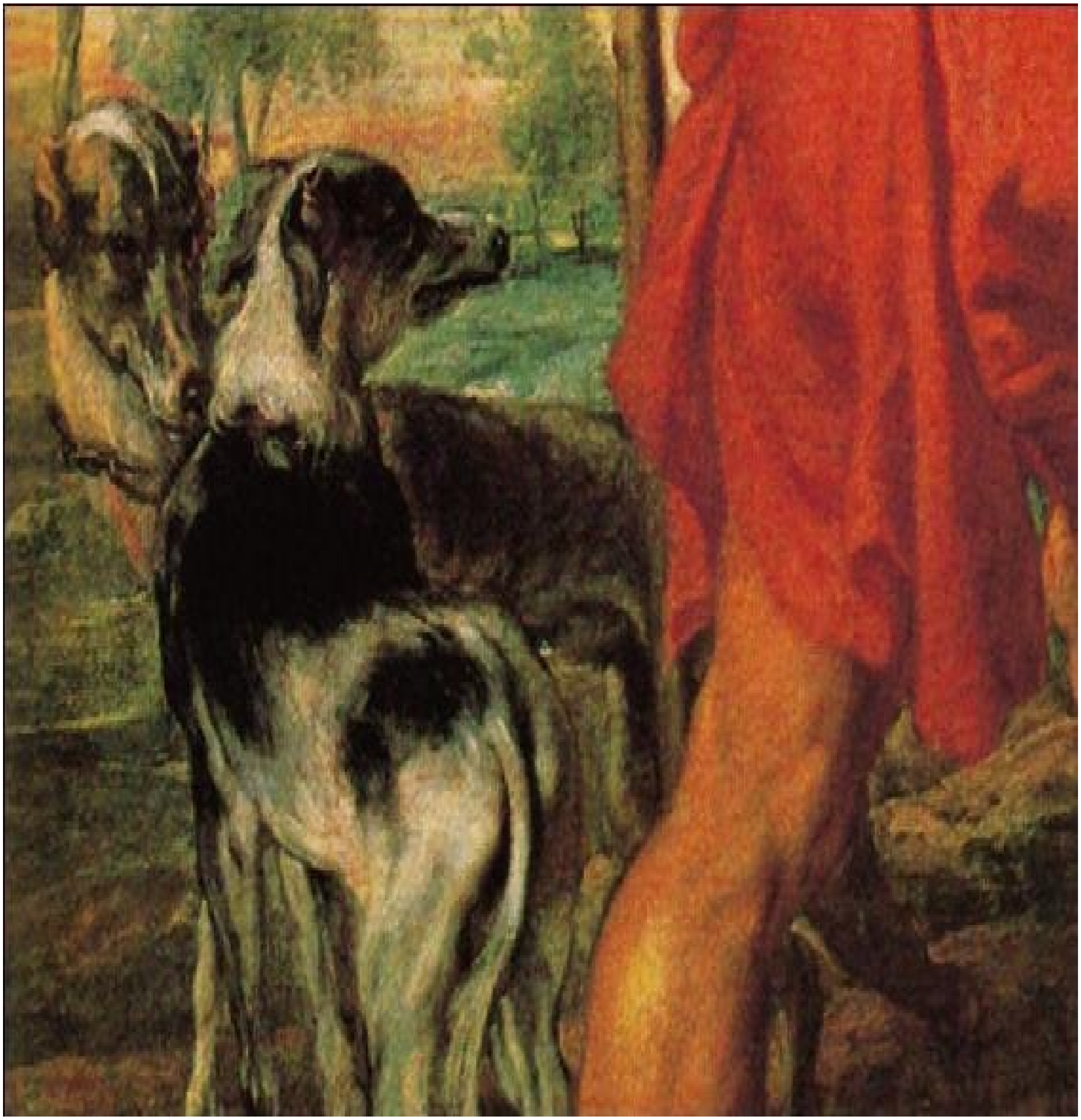

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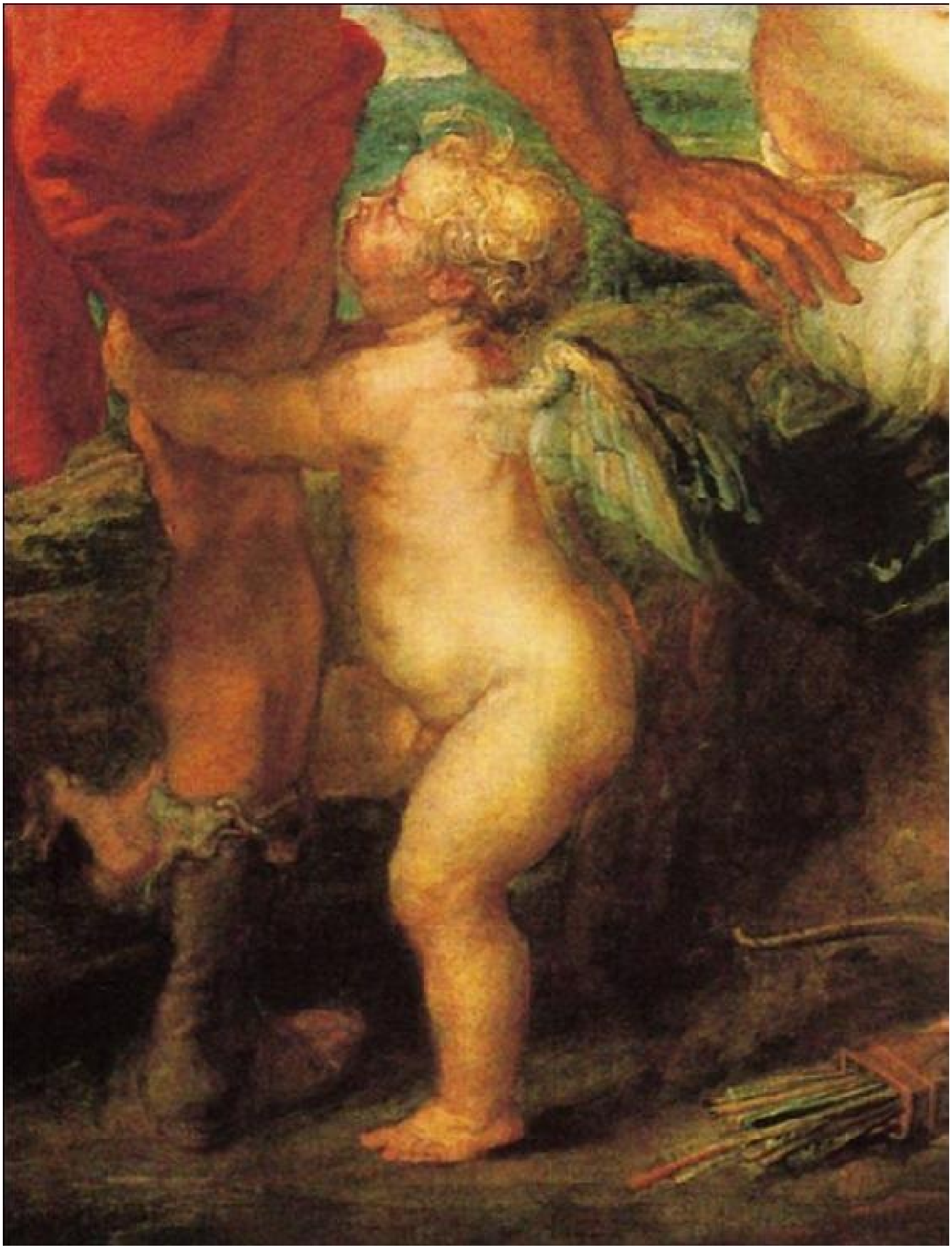

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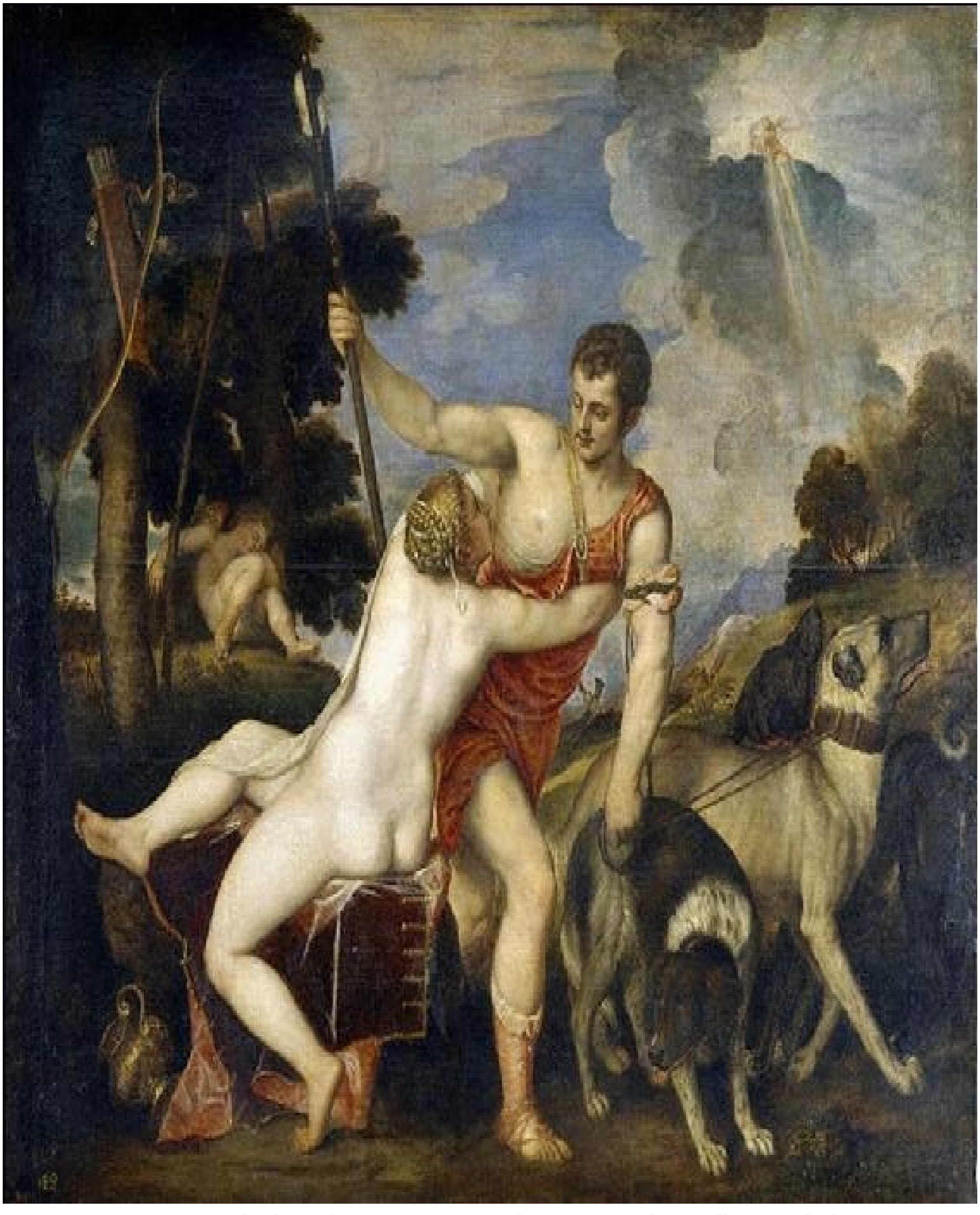


'Venus and Adonis' by Titian, 1554, Prado Museum and Art gallery, Madrid

CONSEQUENCES OF WAR

Completed in

1639 for the grand duke of Tuscany, this ominous painting vividly presents the artist’s growing sense of unease regarding the fragile state of peace between Flanders and England. The monumental canvas provides a bold commentary on a European continent ravaged by the Thirty Years’ War, which Rubens conveys with numerous symbols, both contemporary and ancient, deploring the current state of the continent.

Rubens

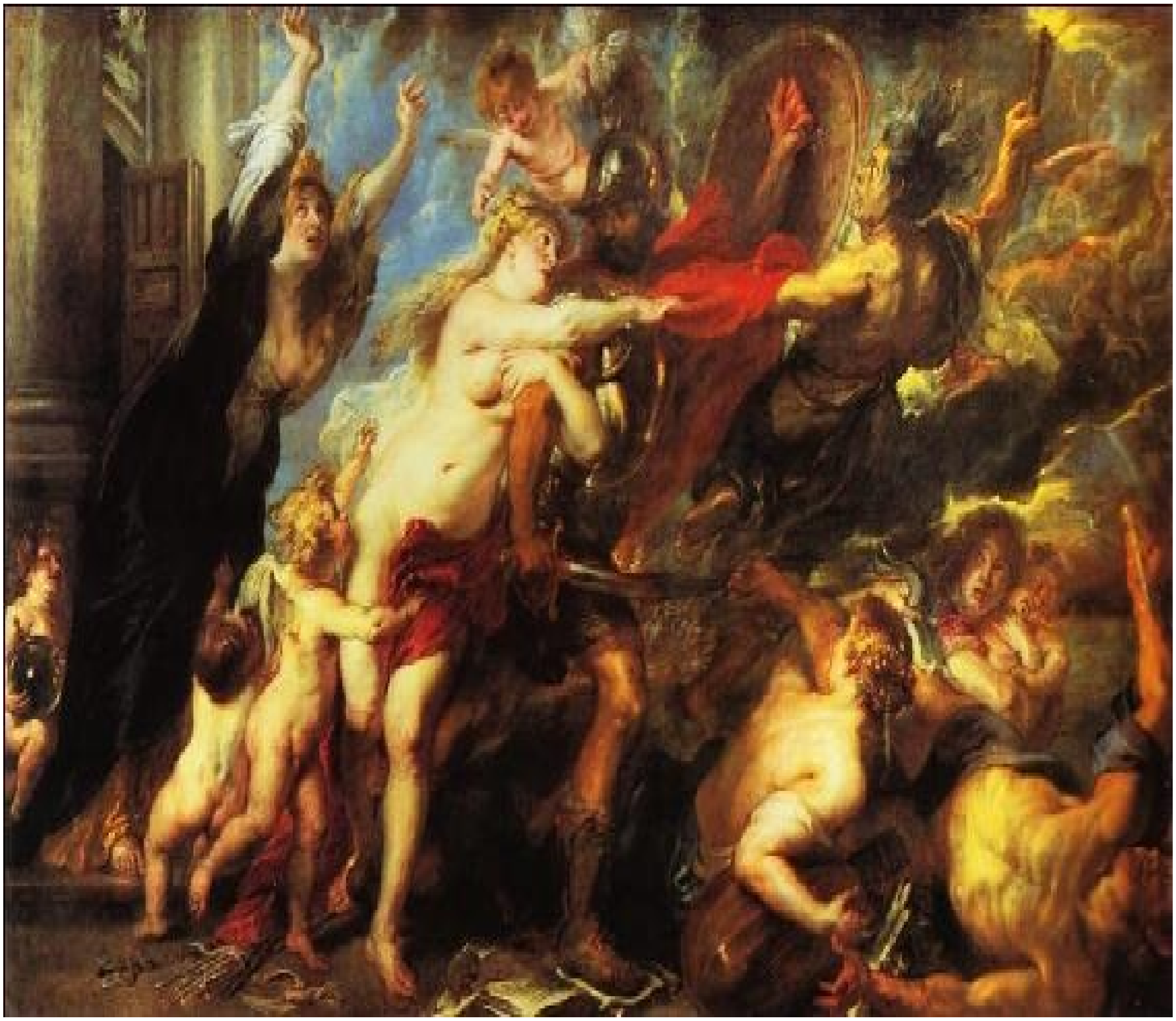
produced the painting in response to the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648), the origins of which are complex and diverse, though it originated from the animosity between Protestants and Catholics. In addition, struggles for political power in Europe contributed to and prolonged the war. Nearly all European states were pulled into the disastrous conflict at some point during the thirty year period. The fighting involved Spain, France, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, the Ottoman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire.

In particular, the war represented a continuation and extension of Habsburg and Bourbon rivalry as well as French and Habsburg animosity. The fighting led to the destruction of large areas of Europe as well as outbreaks of both pestilence and famine, as portrayed in Rubens’ canvas. Much of the fighting took place in the German states, which suffered significant depopulation as a result. The Thirty Years’ War finally ended with the treaties of Osnabruck and Munster as well as the Peace of Westphalia.

The main

figure of the image, now in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence, is the god of war, Mars, who has departed the open temple of Janus — which in times of peace was closed, according to Roman custom — and he grips a shield and blood smeared sword, threatening the surrounding people. Mars is encouraged by the Fury of War, Alecto, accompanied by two monsters that symbolise Plague and Famine, while Venus unsuccessfully attempts to restrain her lover. A woman on the left while Venus unsuccessfully attempts to restrain her lover. A woman on the left personifies wretched Europe, while there are also personifications of Fecundity, Harmony, Maternity and Charity, who all are known to thrive under peace.

A terrified mother grasps her child to her breast, indicating that procreation and charity are threatened by War, which inevitably destroys everything. An architect lies on his back, his instruments held uselessly in his hand, suggesting that creative works that were used to ornament a city are now razed to the ground in this time of conflict.



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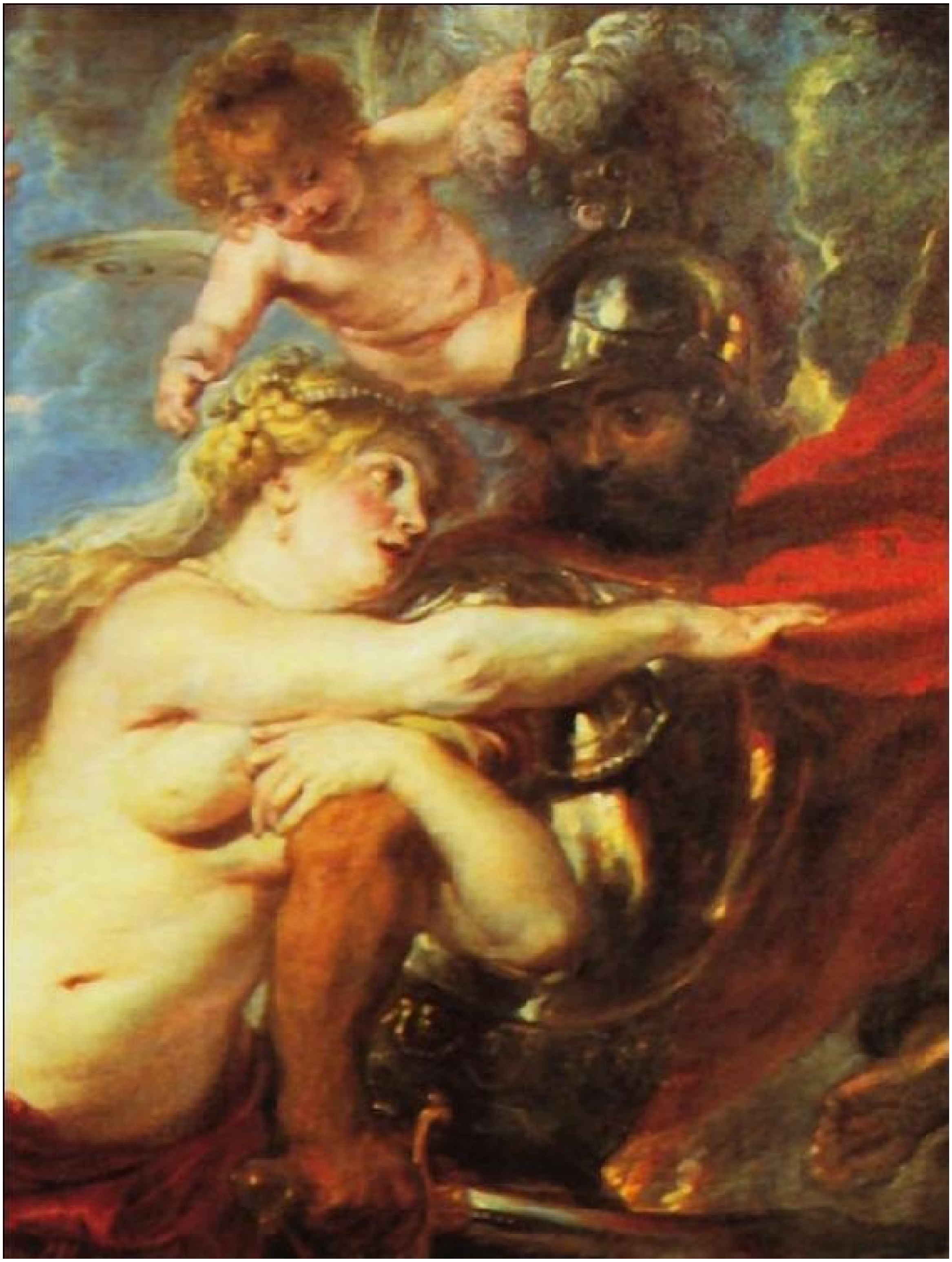

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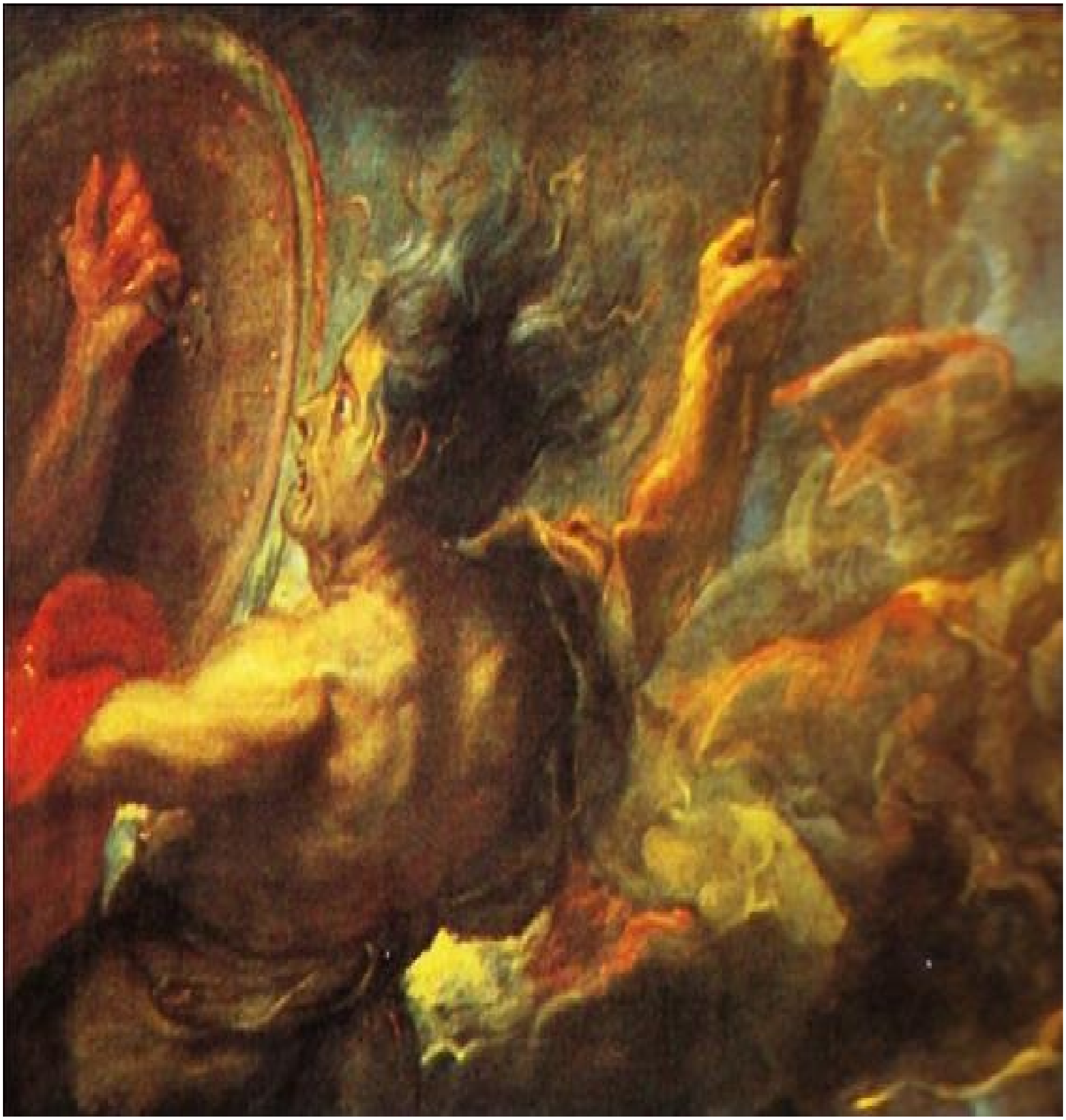

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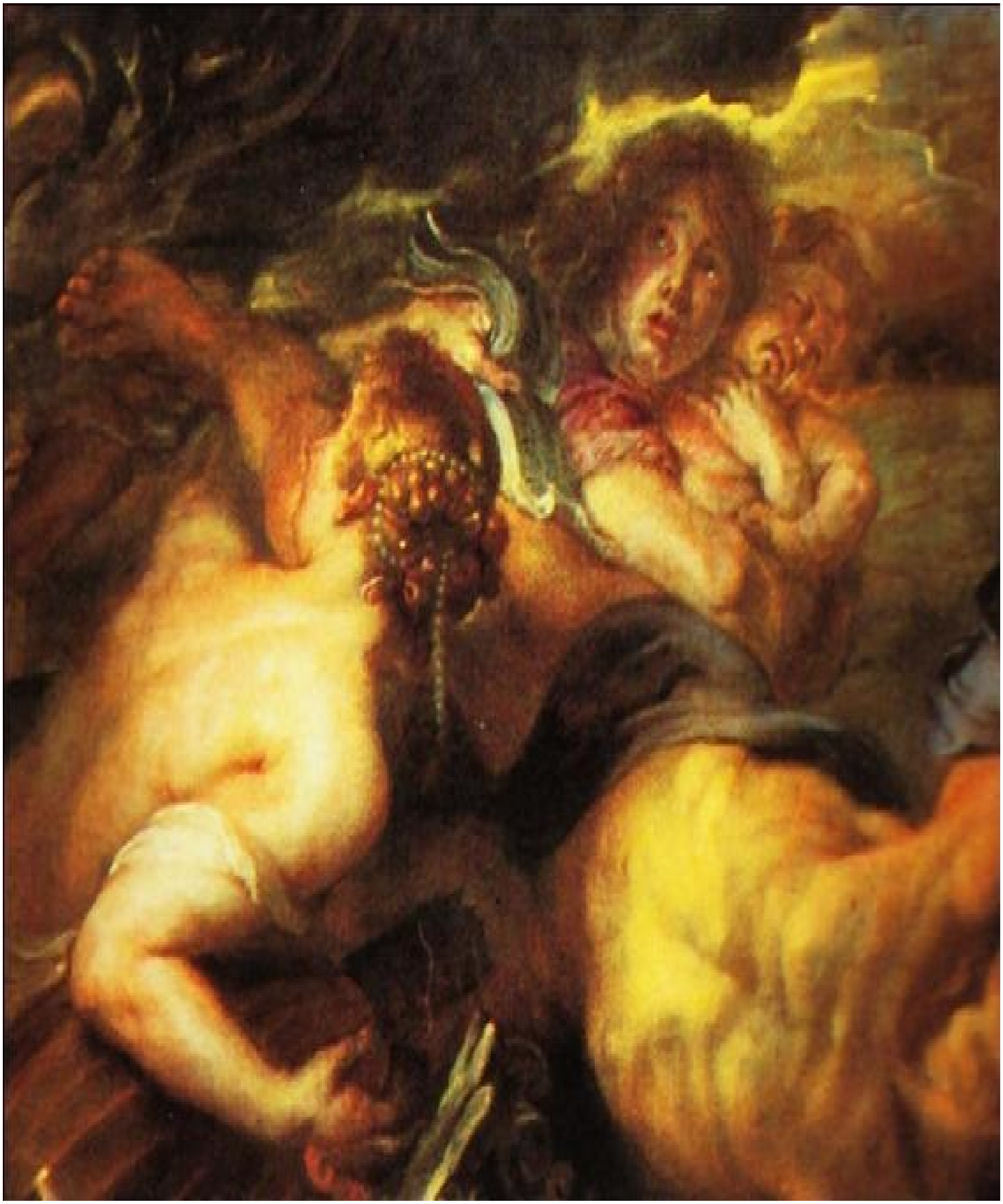

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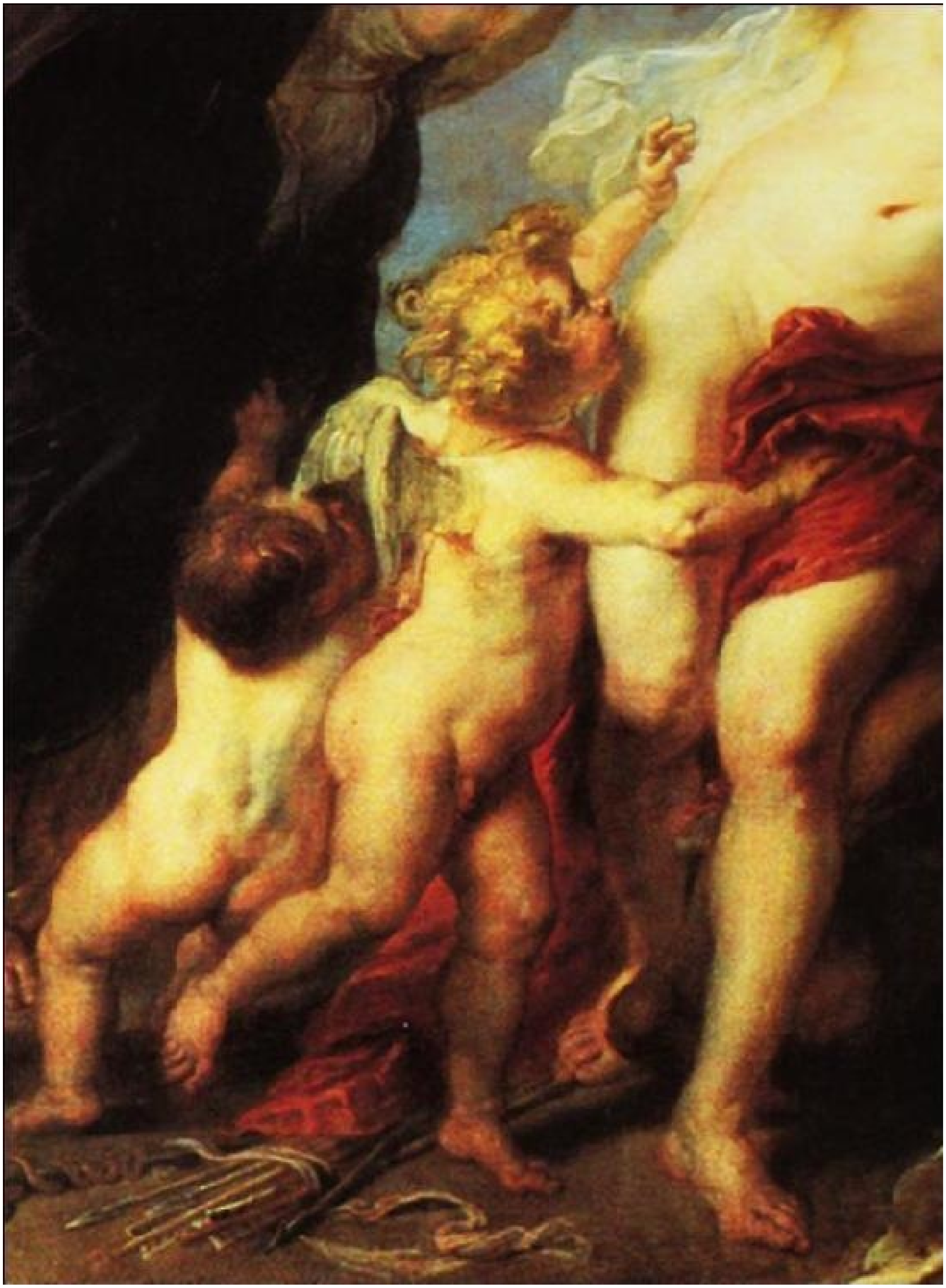

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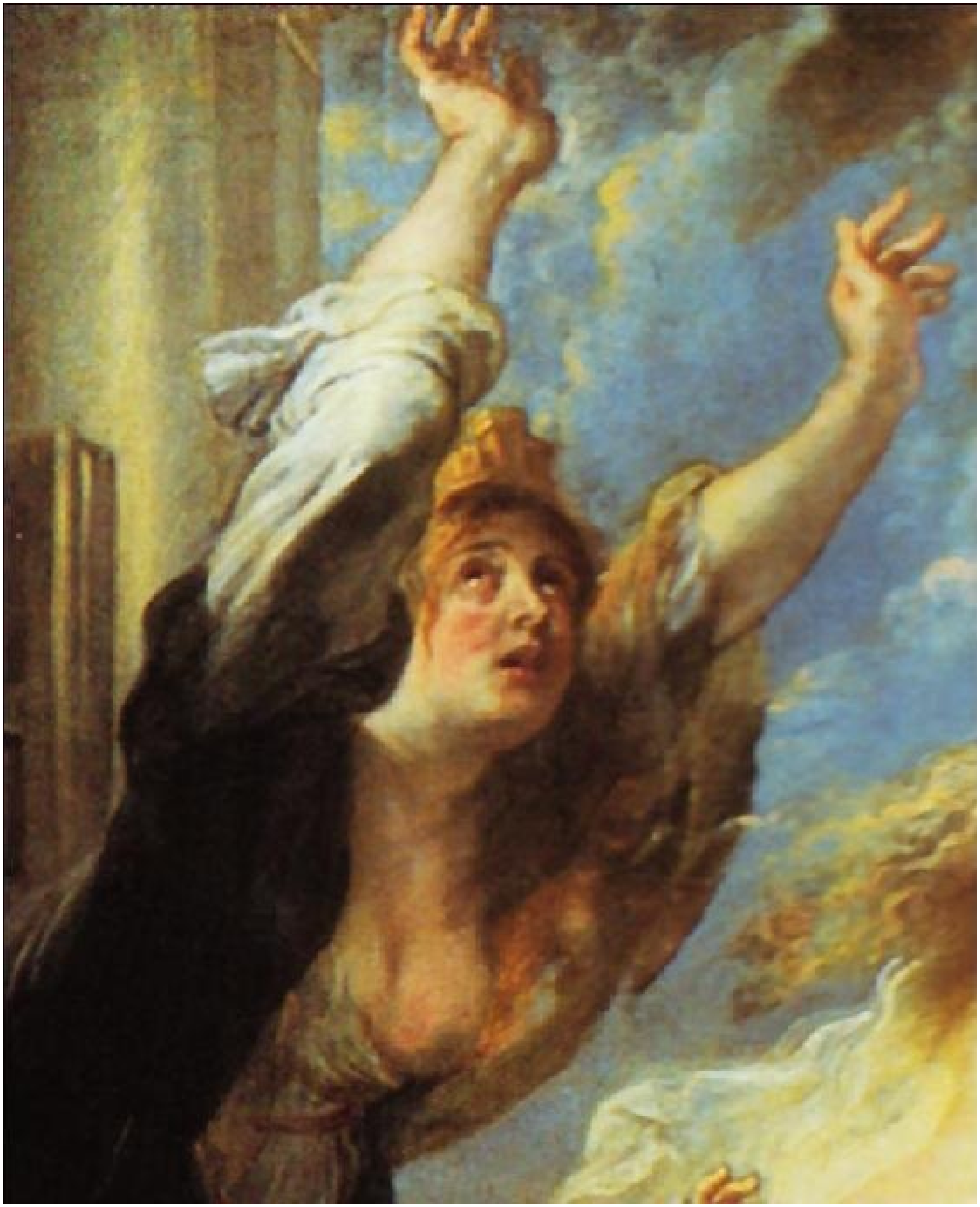

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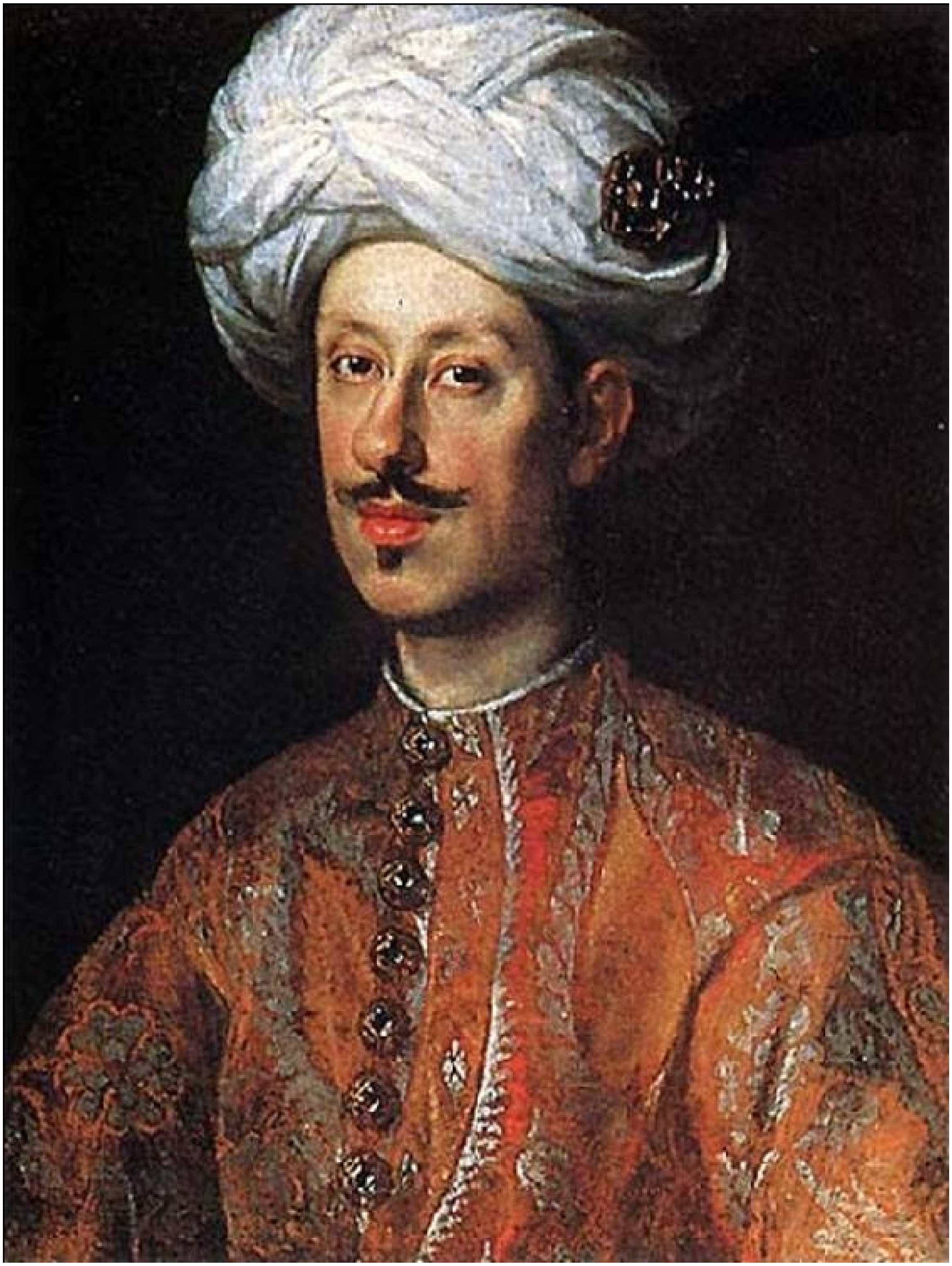


Ferdinando II de' Medici (1610-1670) was grand duke of Tuscany from 1621 to 1670. He was the eldest child of Cosimo II de' Medici and Maria Maddalena of Austria. His 49 year rule was punctuated by the *beginning of Tuscany’s long economic decline.*

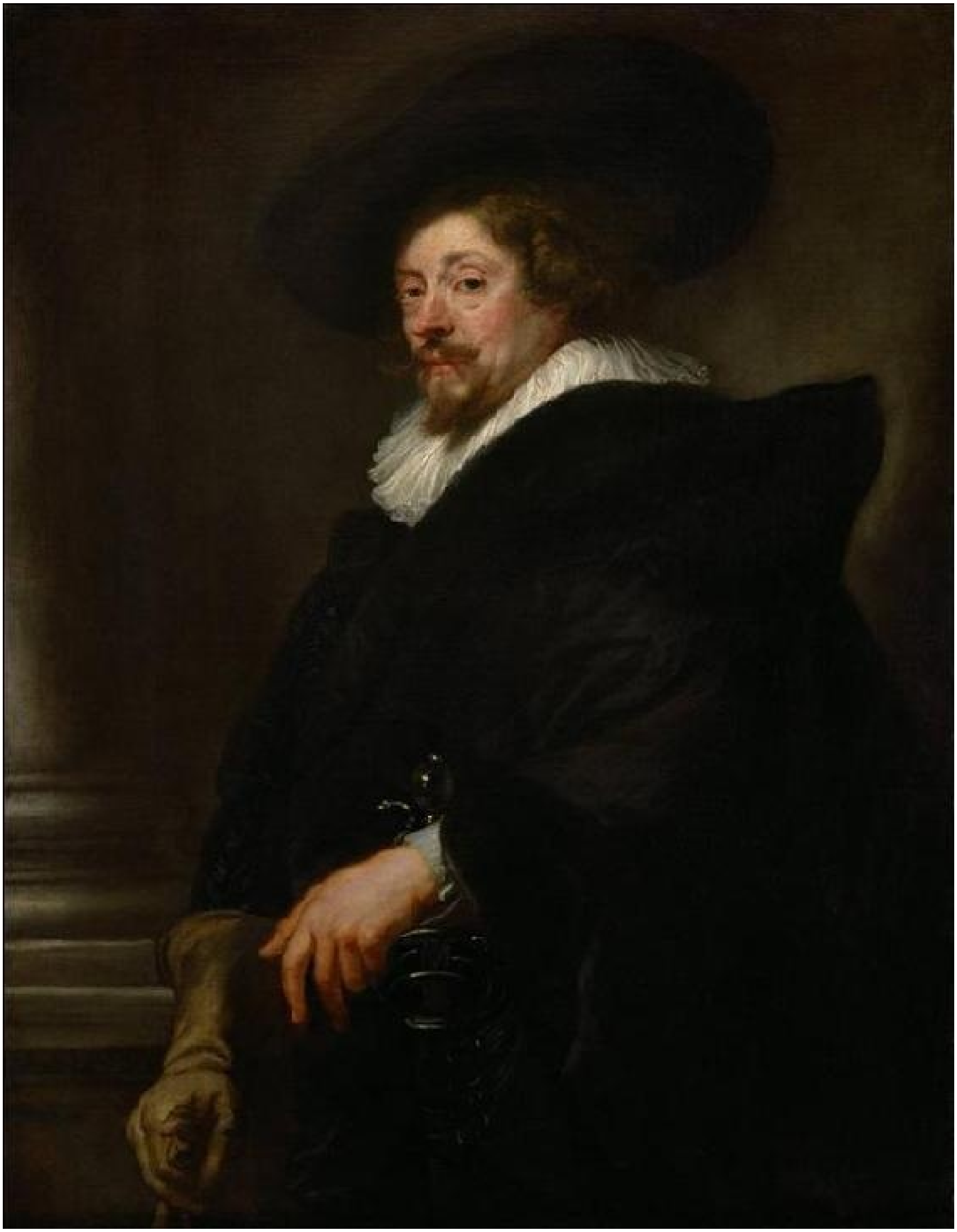
SELF-PORTRAIT

Housed in Vienna’s Kunsthiorisches Museum, this half-length self-portrait was painted in the final years of Rubens’ life, presenting him as an aristocratic man, without any identification of his trade, which Rubens chose never to reveal in any of his previous self-portraits.

Instead the artist opts for the image of a well-to-do nobleman, standing beside a stone column, a traditional motif of aristocratic portraiture, which he had also used in earlier portraits of members of his family.

Unlike Rembrandt, who in his later years used the self-portrait for detailed introspection, Rubens uses the genre for worldly presentation to the public. As his ungloved left hand rests on the hilt of his sword, he holds in his right (gloved) hand, the other glove, while confidently looking out towards the viewer. One hand is gloved to emphasise the other hand, resting on the jewelled sword that was presented to the artist by Charles I, when knighting Rubens in 1630. Once again, Rubens was most likely inspired by his beloved Titian’s portrait of a man holding a glove, now in the Louvre, which was acquired by Charles I in 1627 and most likely viewed by Rubens in the Royal Collection.

Rubens’ delineation of himself reflects his encroaching old age, as we can glimpse the sagging flesh under the eyes. In his early sixties, Rubens often suffered long bouts of gout, particularly troubling his right hand, which thwarted any attempts at holding a paintbrush. Although there were periods were the gout went into remission, the condition still disrupted the artist’s previous prolific output. On 30 May 1640, he died from heart failure, which was a result of the chronic gout. He was interred in Saint Jacob’s church, Antwerp.



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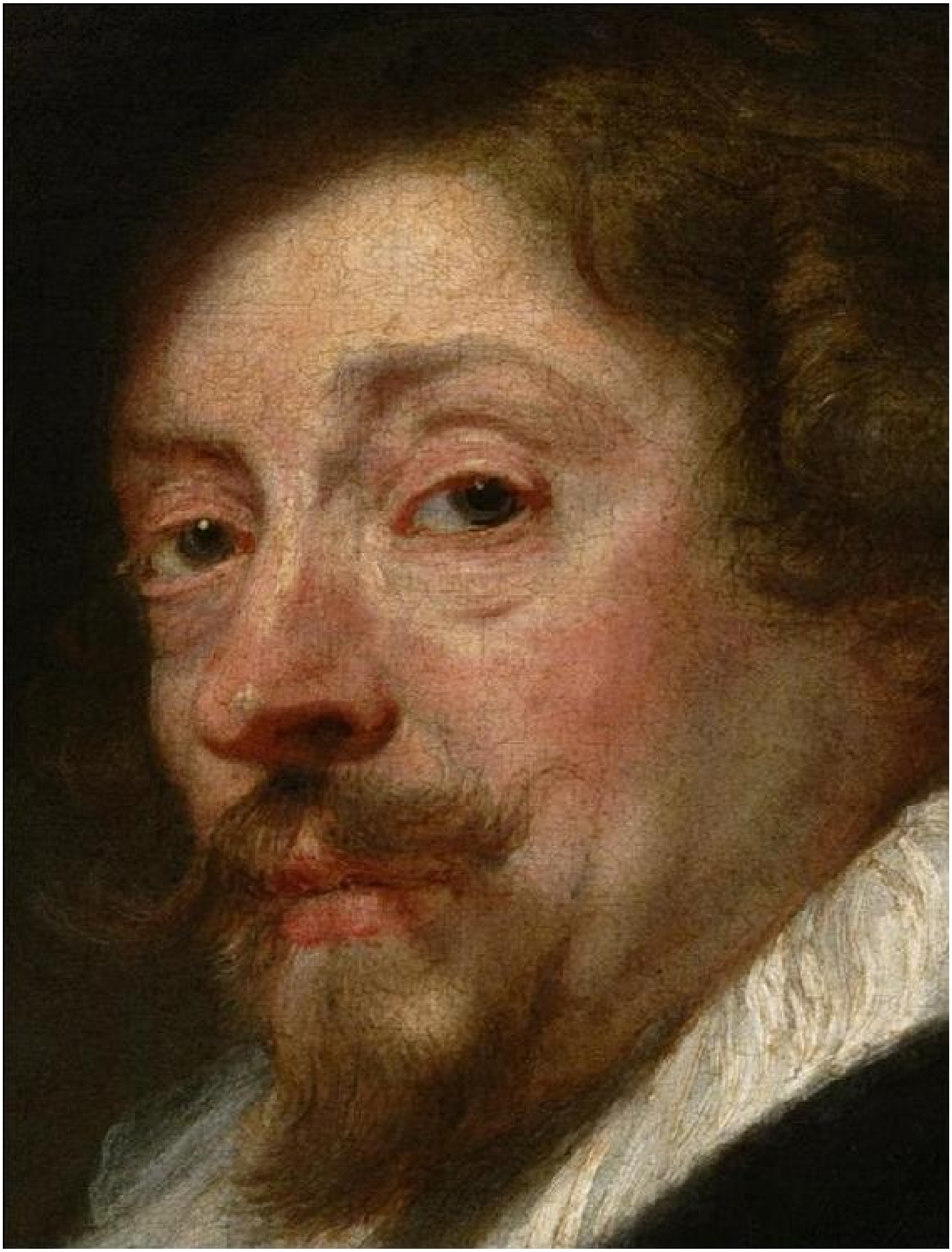

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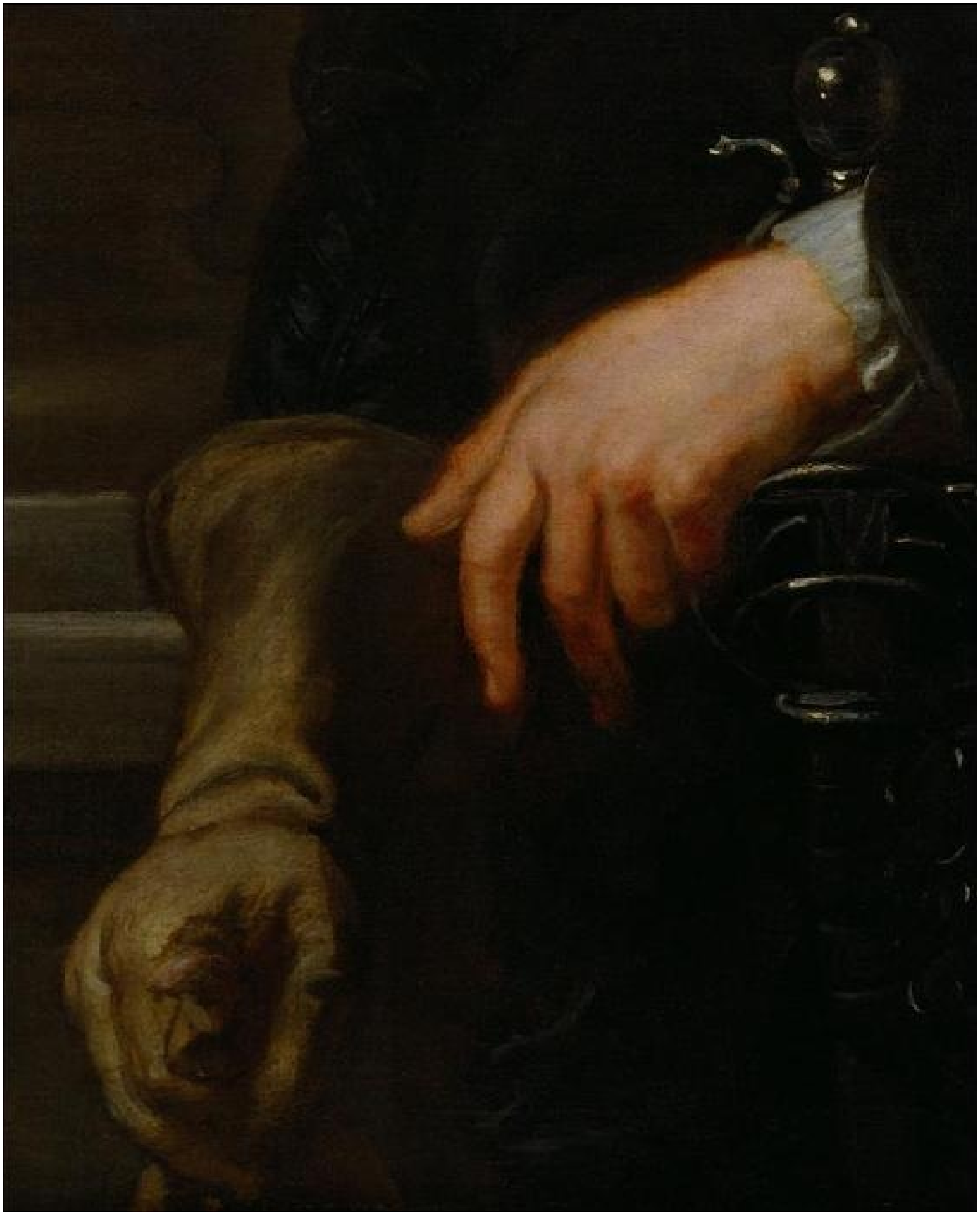

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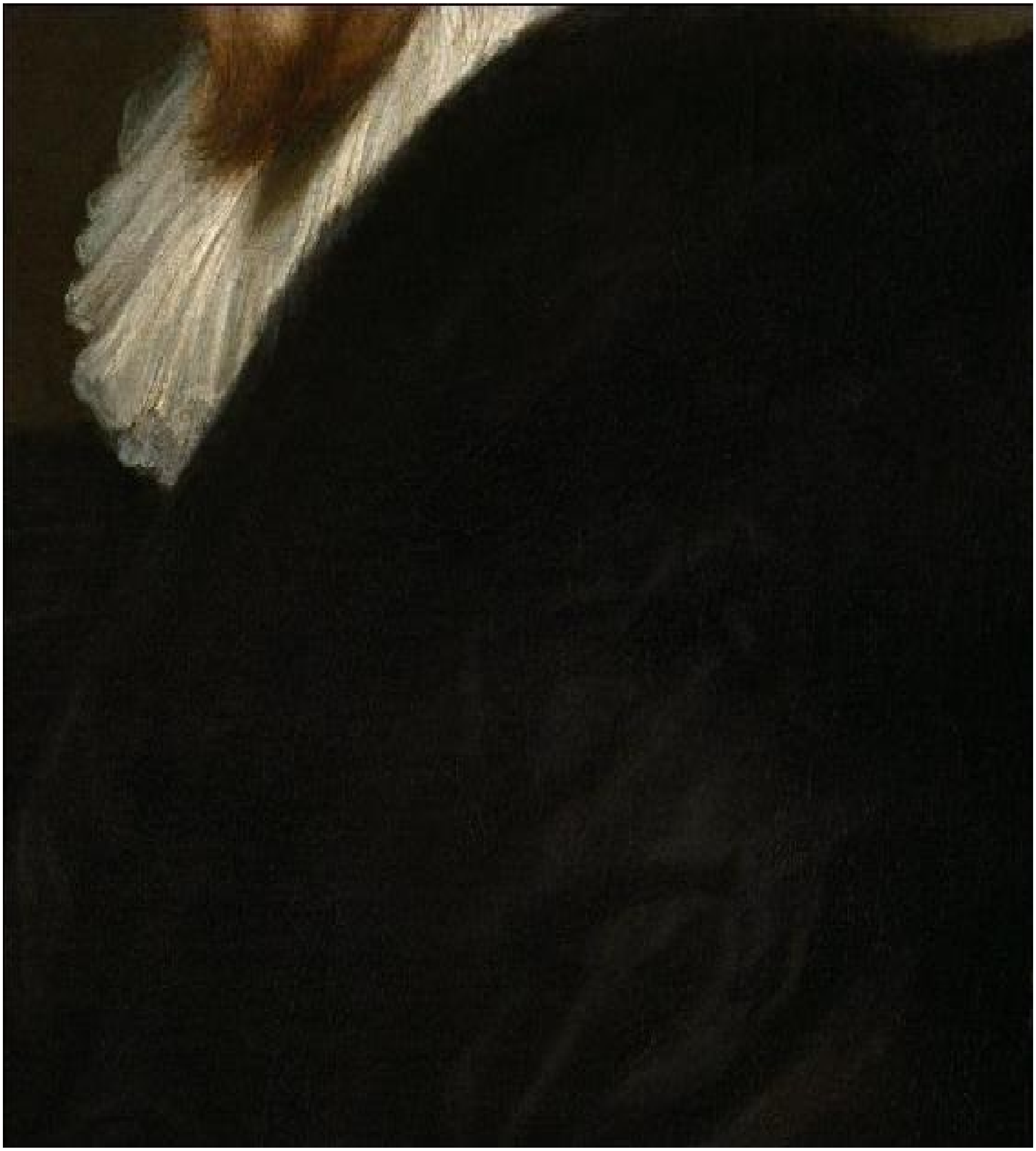

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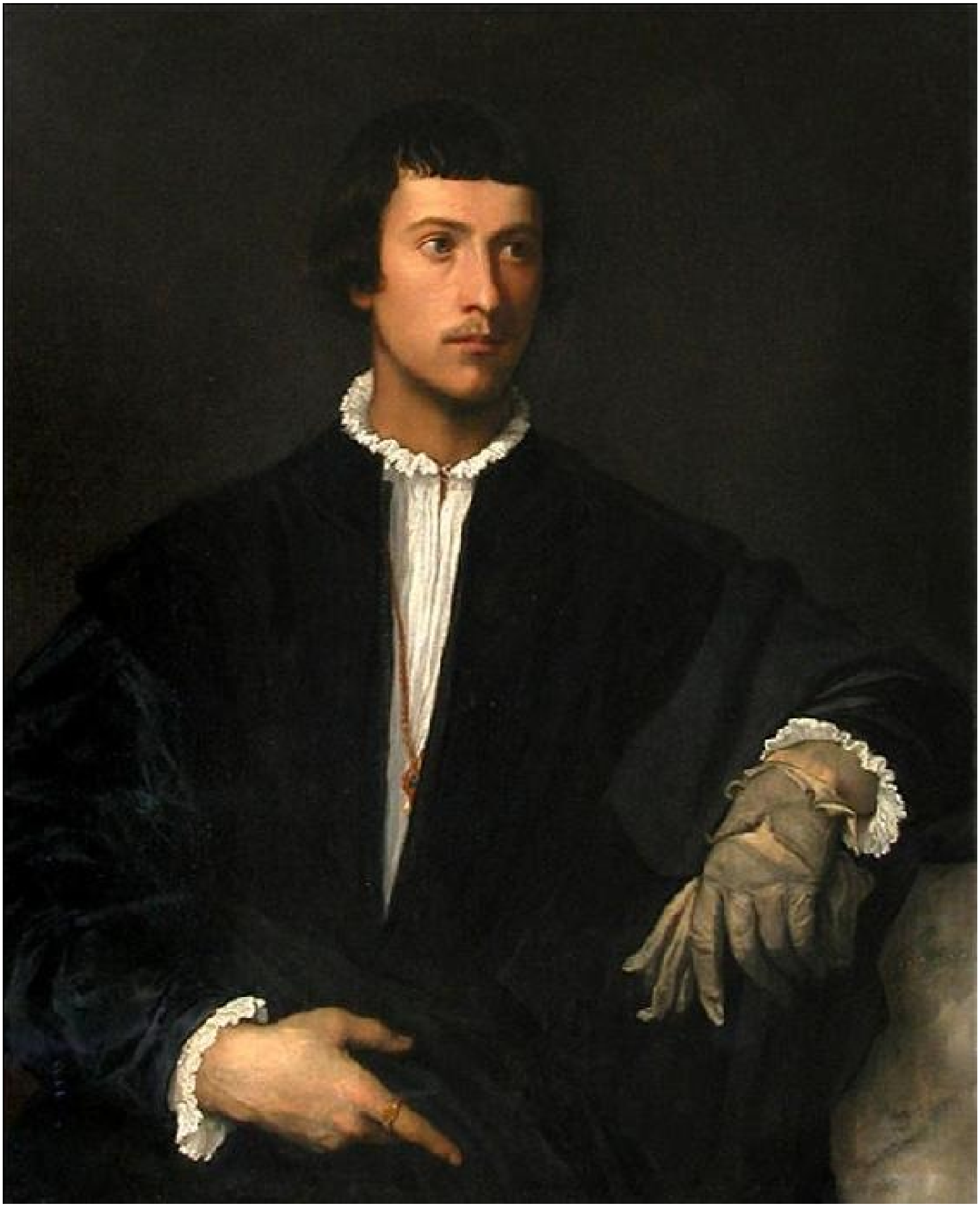
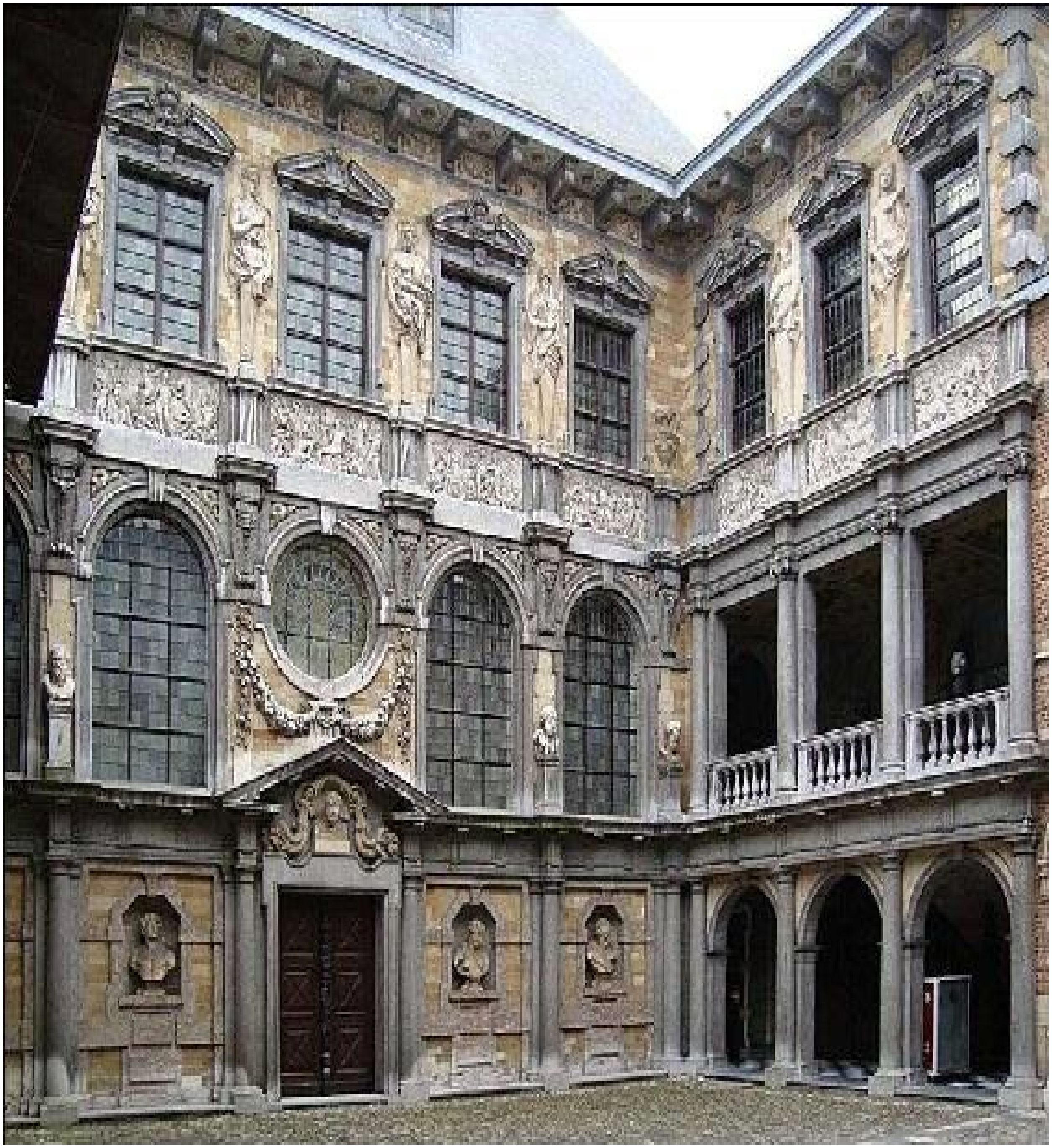


‘Man with a Glove’ by Titian, c. 1520

The Paintings

Rubenshuis, the former home and studio of Rubens in Antwerp. The building is now a museum dedicated to

Rubenshuis, the former home and studio of Rubens in Antwerp. The building is now a museum dedicated to the artist’s life and works.



The interior courtyard, leading on to Rubens' prolific studio, where up to 100 apprentices were reported to be working at one time.

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Portrait of Isabella Brant
The Sacrifice of the Old Covenant
The Victory of Eucharistic Truth over Heresy
Albert and Nicolaas Rubens
Christ on the Cross
Portrait of Ludovicus Nonnius
Ulysses and Nausicaa on the Island of the Phaeacians
Immaculate Conception
Portrait of Ambrogio Spinola
Portrait of Jan Gaspar Gevartius
Self-Portrait
The Prophet Elijah Receiving Bread and Water from an Angel
Triumph of Church over Fury, Discord, and Hate
Adoration of the Magi
Catherine Manners, Duchess of Buckingham

1630’s

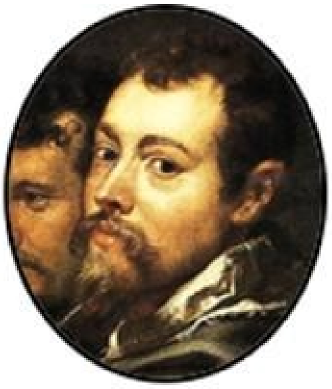
Allegory on the Blessings of Peace

Deborah Kip, Wife of Sir Balthasar Gerbier, and Her Children
Feast of Venus
Isabella Brant
Landscape with Cows and Wildfowlers
Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon
Portrait of Helena Fourment
Summer
The Death of Achilles
The Holy Family with St. Anne
The Meeting of David and Abigail
The Rape of Europa
Thomas Howard, Second Count of Arundel
Triumphal Entry of Henry IV into Paris
Helena Fourment
Rubens and Helene Fourment in the Garden
The Crowning of St. Catherine
Hagar in the Desert
Portrait of Helene Fourment with Gloves
The Last Supper
The Last Supper
Garden of Love
Hercules as Heroic Virtue Overcoming Discord
King James I of England
Mercury and a Sleeping Herdsman
The Feast of Herod
The Martyrdom of St. Livinus
Our Lady with the Saints
The Cardinal Infante
Autumn Landscape with a View of Het Steen
Bathsheba at the Fountain
Castle Garden
Forest Landscape at the Sunrise
Helena Fourment with her Son Francis
Landscape with a Rainbow
Landscape with the Carriage at the Sunset
St. Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata
The Village Fête (Flemish Kermis)
Venus und Adonis
Dance of Italian Villagers

Landscape with Cows
The Judgment of Paris
Carrying the Cross
Helene Fourment with her Children
Massacre of the Innocents
The Rape of the Sabine Women
The Road to Calvary
Tournament in front of Castle Steen
Andromeda
Bacchus
Landscape with a Rainbow
Landscape with Tower
Mercury and Argus
Pastoral Scene
Tereus Confronted with the Head of His Son Itylus
The Consequences of War
The Kermesse
Altarpiece of St. Ildefonso (right panel)
Diana and Callisto
Martyrdom of St. Thomas
Portrait of Helene Fourment with a Coach
Rubens Rubens his wife Helena Fourment and their son Peter Paul
Self-Portrait
St. Augustine
The Three Graces
Diana and her Nymphs Surprised by the Fauns
Nymphs and Satyrs
Perseus and Andromeda
St. Cecilia
The Return of the Farm Workers from the Fields
Venus in Fur Coat
Woman with a Mirror
Adoration of the Shepherds
Alexander and Roxana
Alfonso I d’Este, Duke of Ferrara
Annunciation
Apotheosis of King James I
Assumption of Virgin
Battle of the Amazons

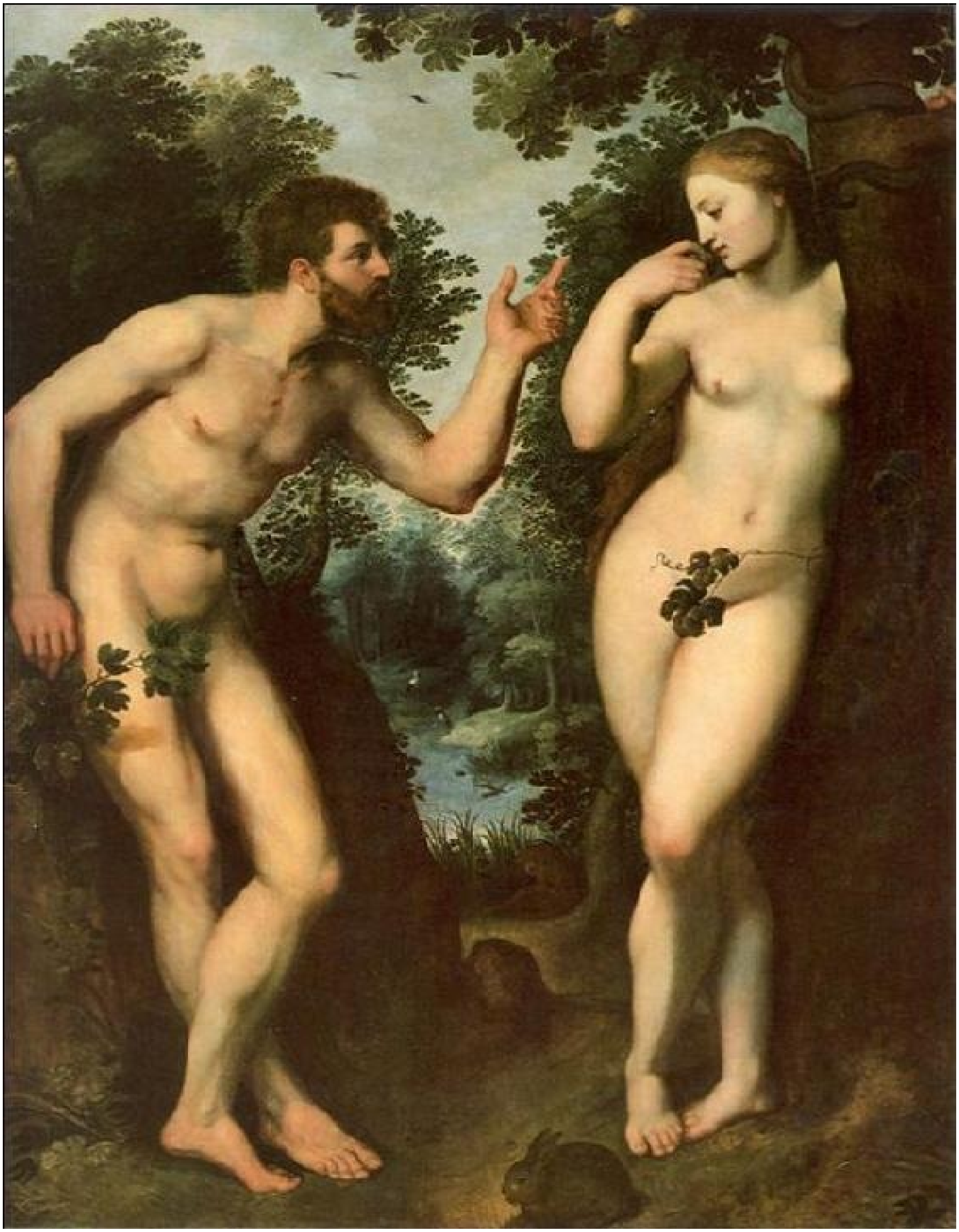
Charles V and the Empress Isabella
Christ and St. John with Angels
Christoffel Plantin
Drunken Bacchus with Faun and Satyr
Helena Fourment
Holy Trinity
Ildefonso Altar
Landscape with a Watering Place
Landscape with an Avenue of Trees
Martyrdom of St. Catherine
Miracle of St. Ignatius of Loyola
Peace and Abundance
Portrait of a Man, Probably Peter Van Hecke
Portrait of a Woman
Portrait of a Woman, Probably Susanna Lunden
Portrait of Haspar Hevarts
Saint Felix Of Cantalice
Satyr and Girl
Self-Portrait in a Circle of Friends from Mantua
Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus
Small Last Judgement
St. George with St. Maurus and Papianus
The Flagellation of Christ
St. Ildefonso Receiving a Priest Cloak
Studies of the Head of a Negro
The Abbot of St. Michael’s

1590’s



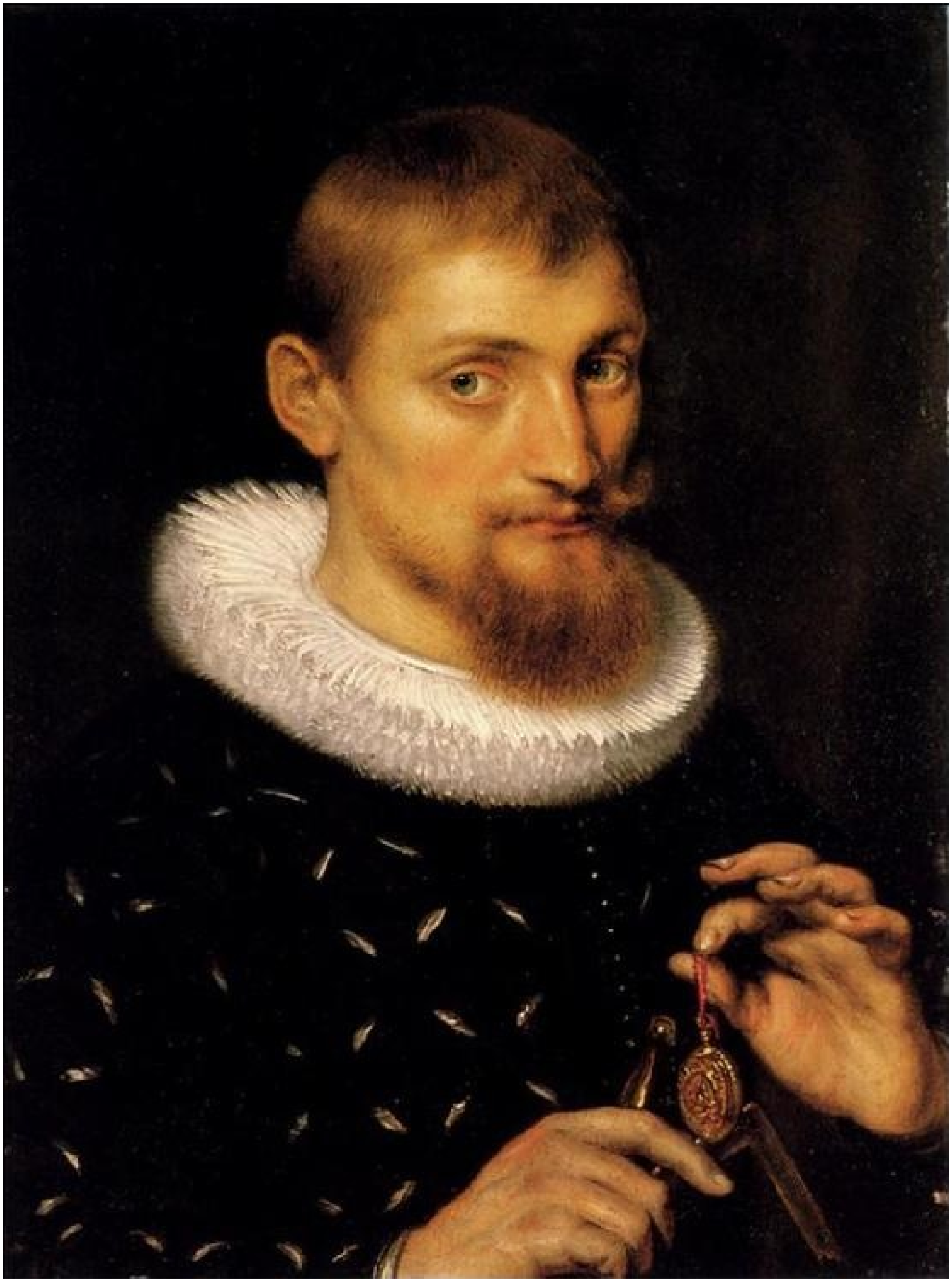
Adam and Eve

c.1597
158 x 180 cm
Rubenshuis, Antwerp

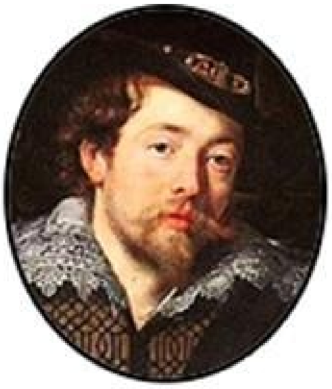


Portrait of a Man

1597
21.6 x 14.6 cm
Private Collection

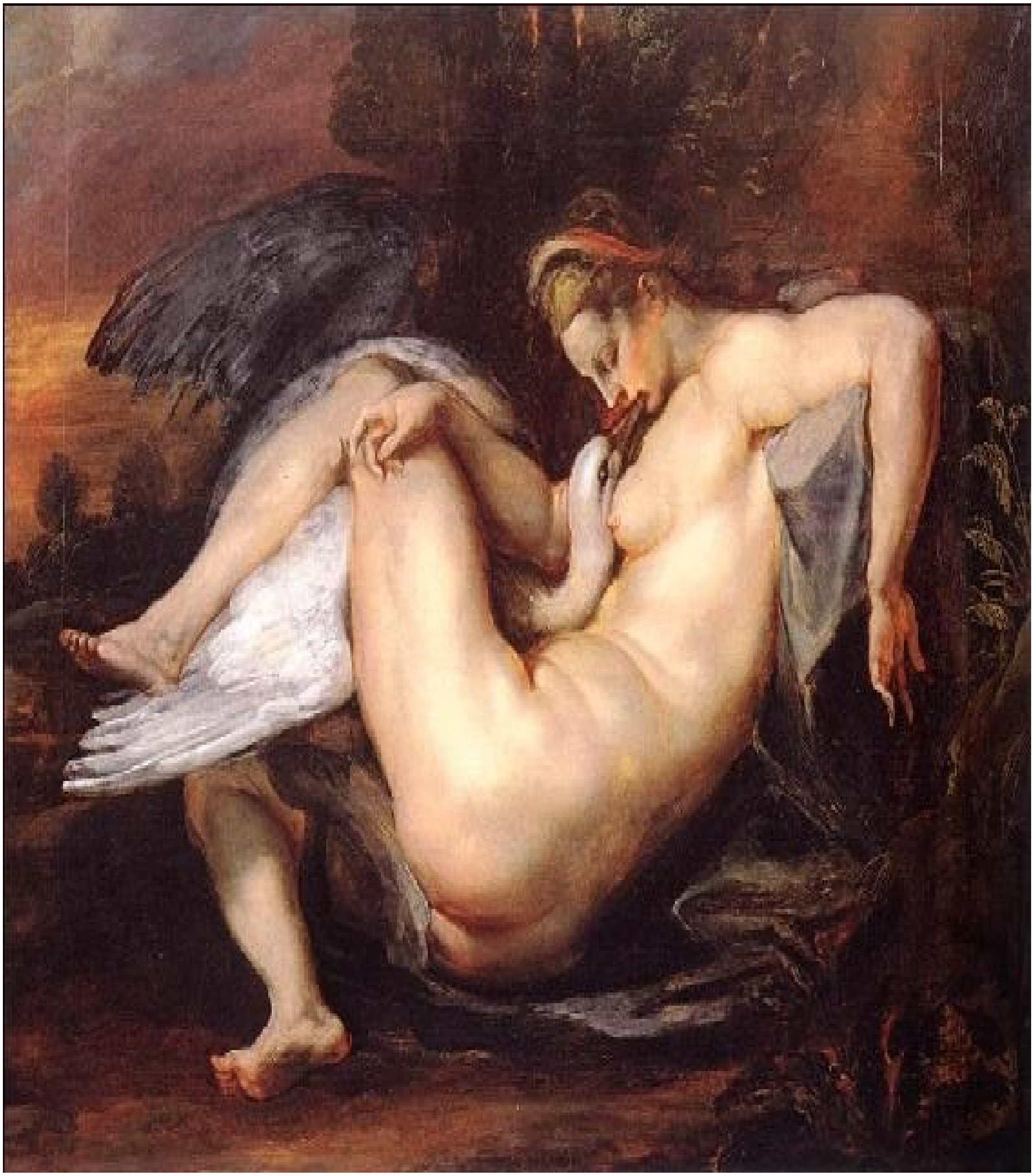


1600’s



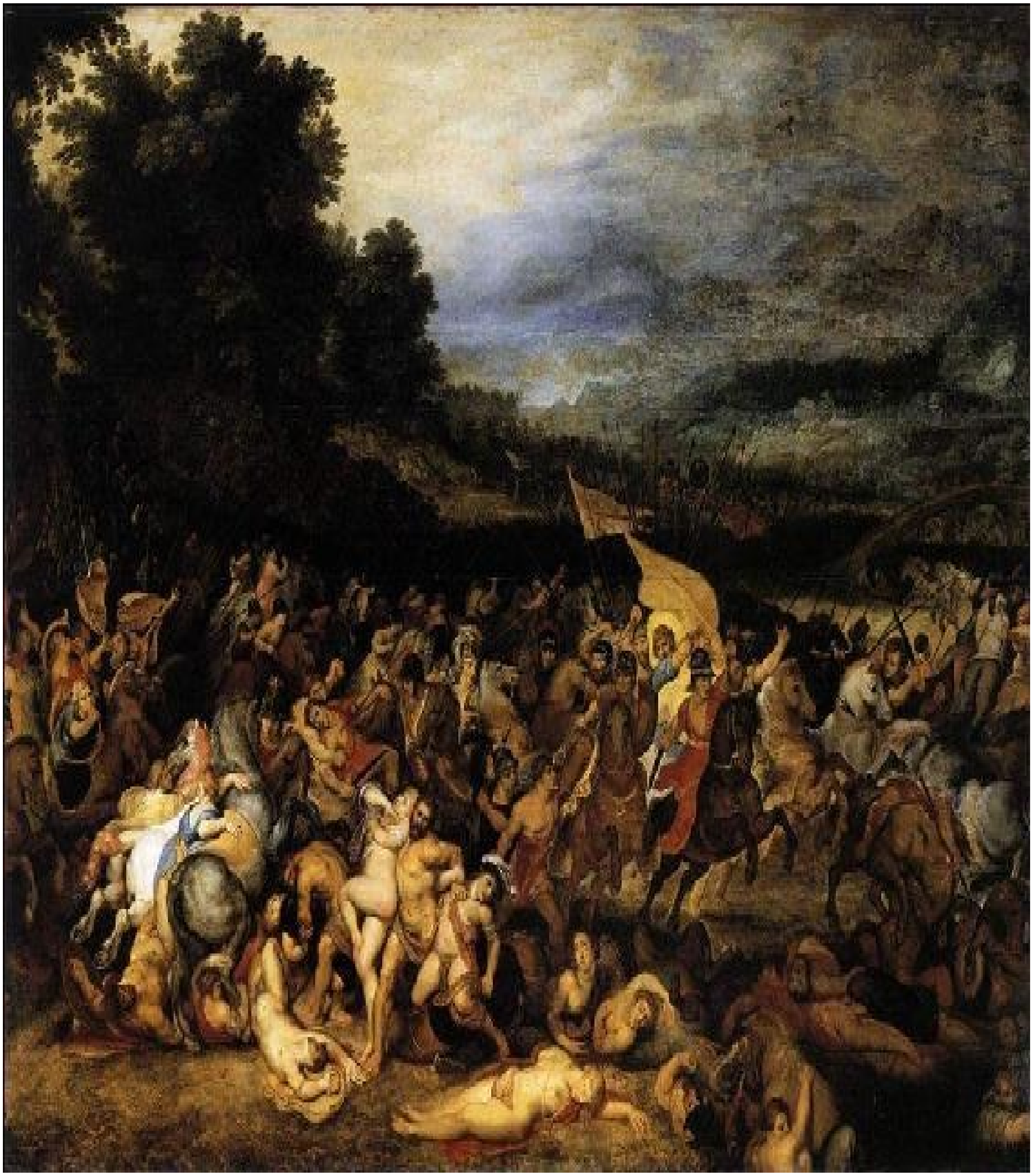
Leda and the Swan

c.1600
64 x 80 cm



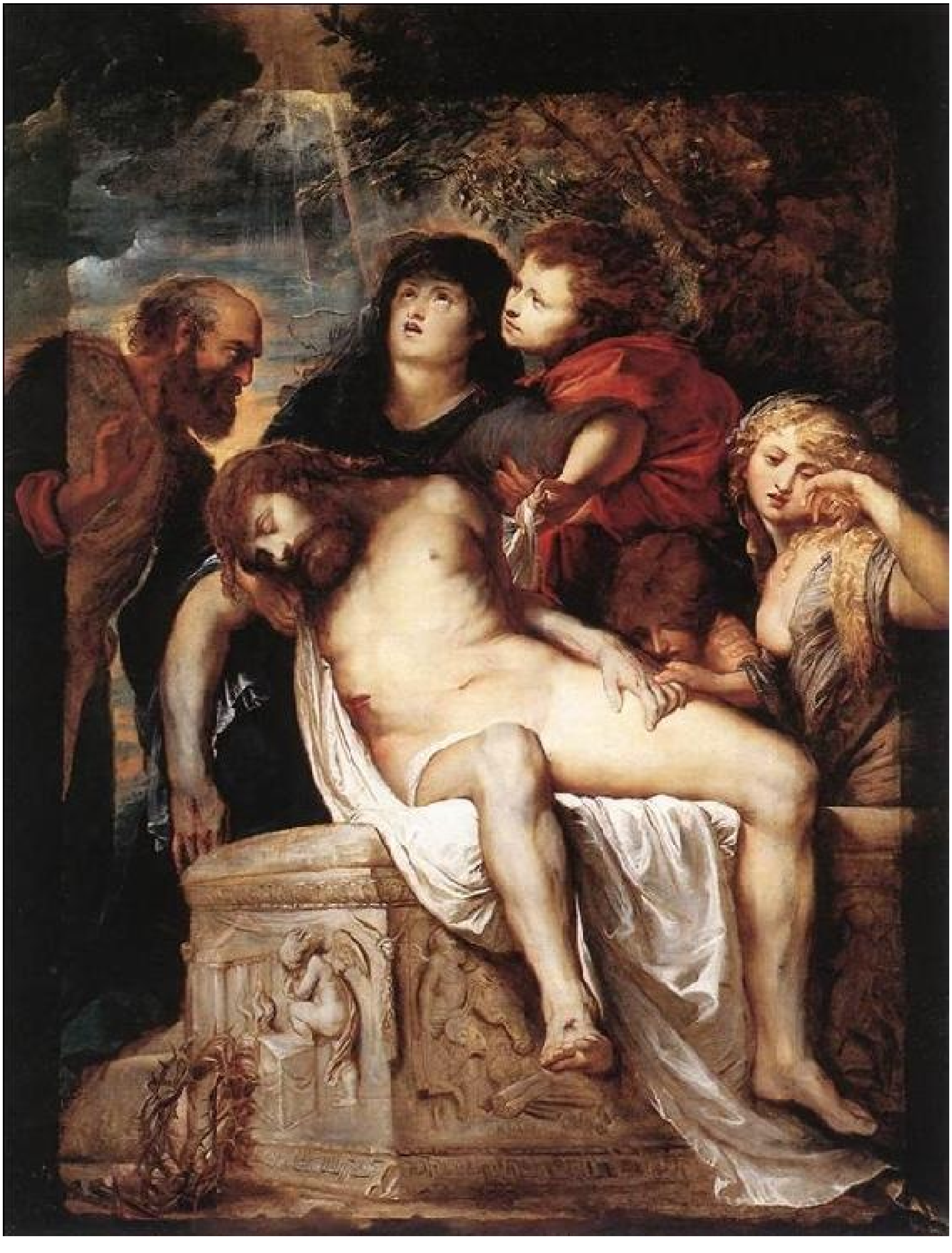
The Battle of the Amazons

1602
Oil on wood,
65 x 81 cm
Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge



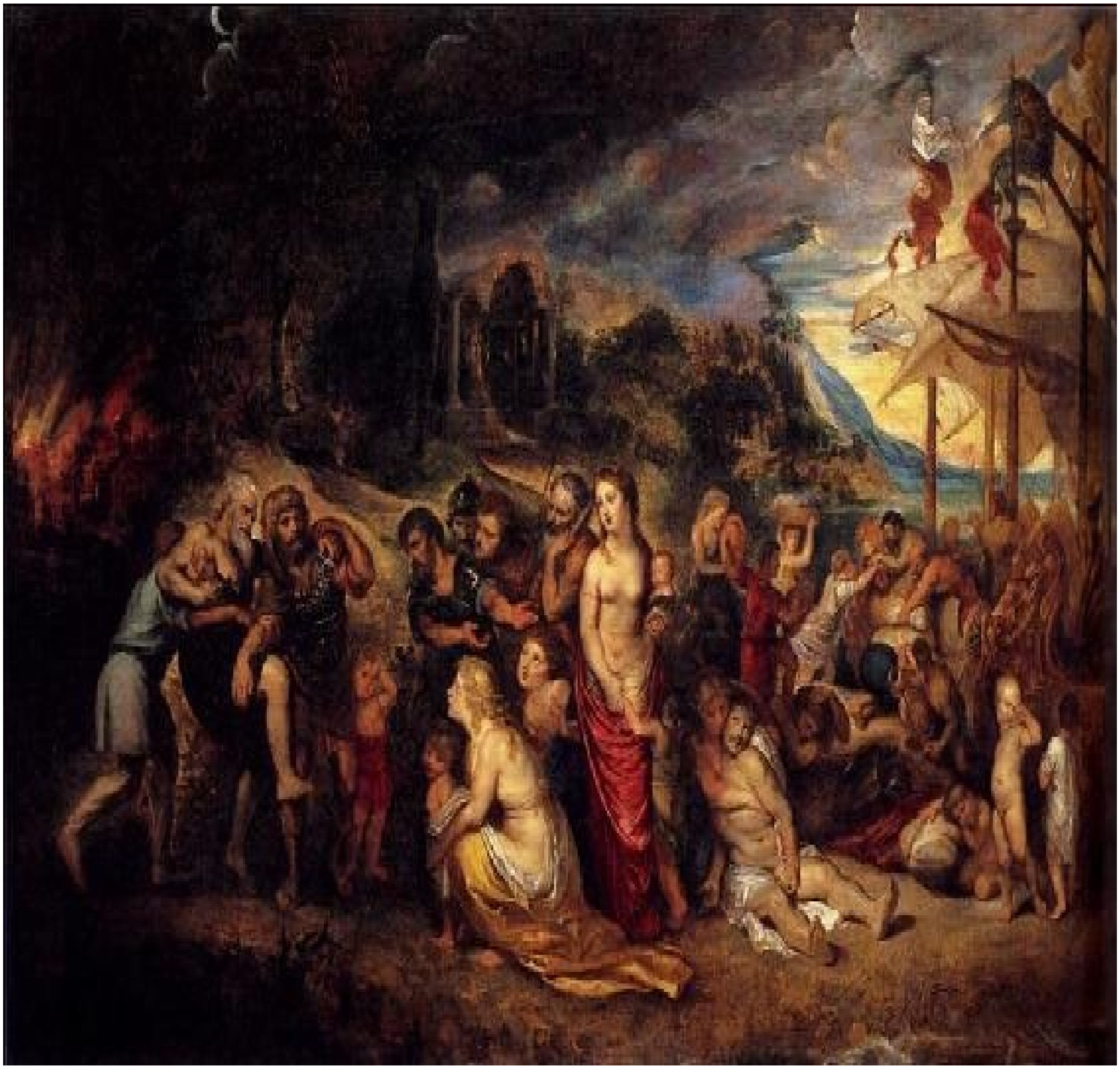
The Deposition

1602
Oil on canvas, 180 x 137 cm
Galleria Borghese, Rome



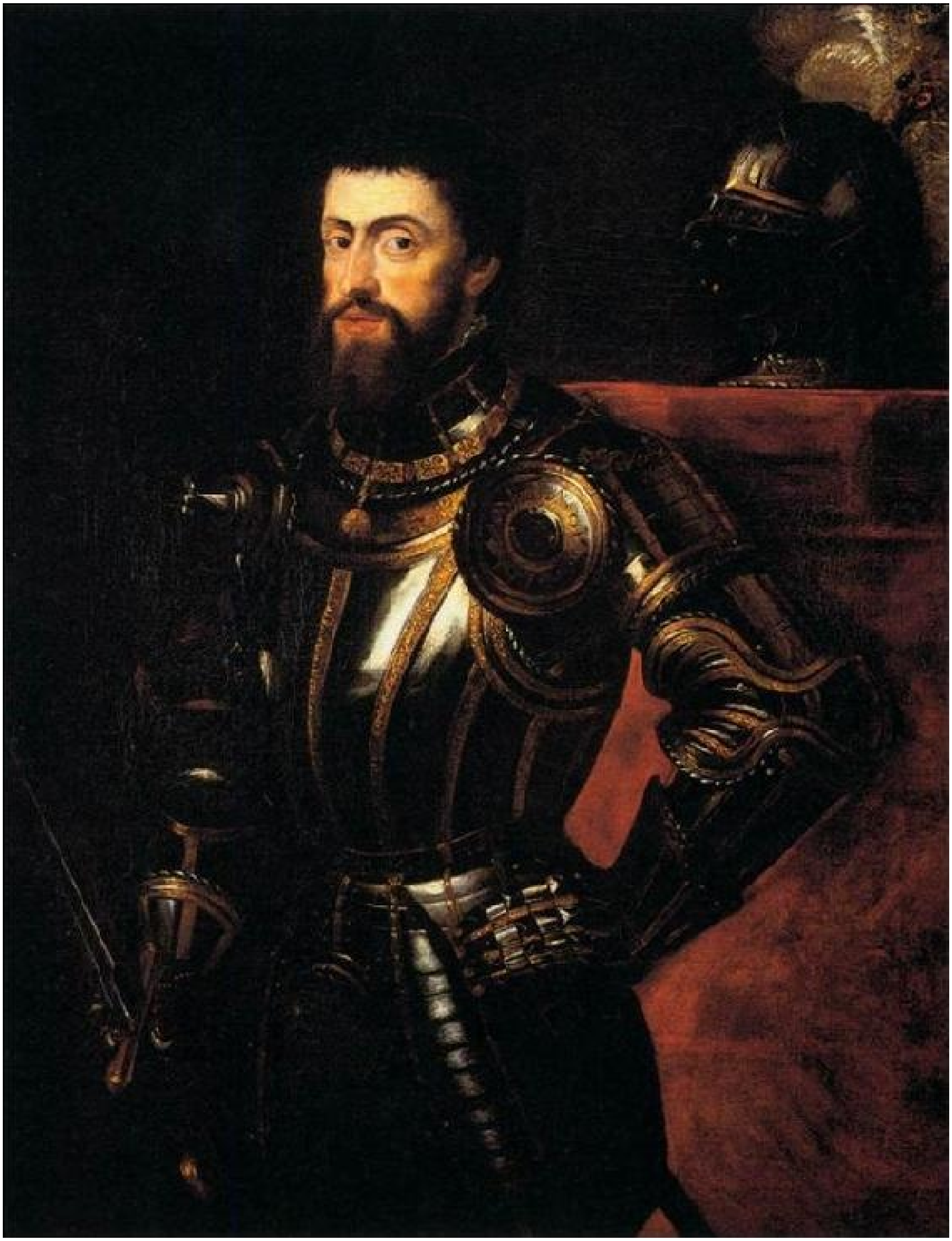
Aeneas And His Family Departing From Troy

1603
146 x 227 cm
Private Collection



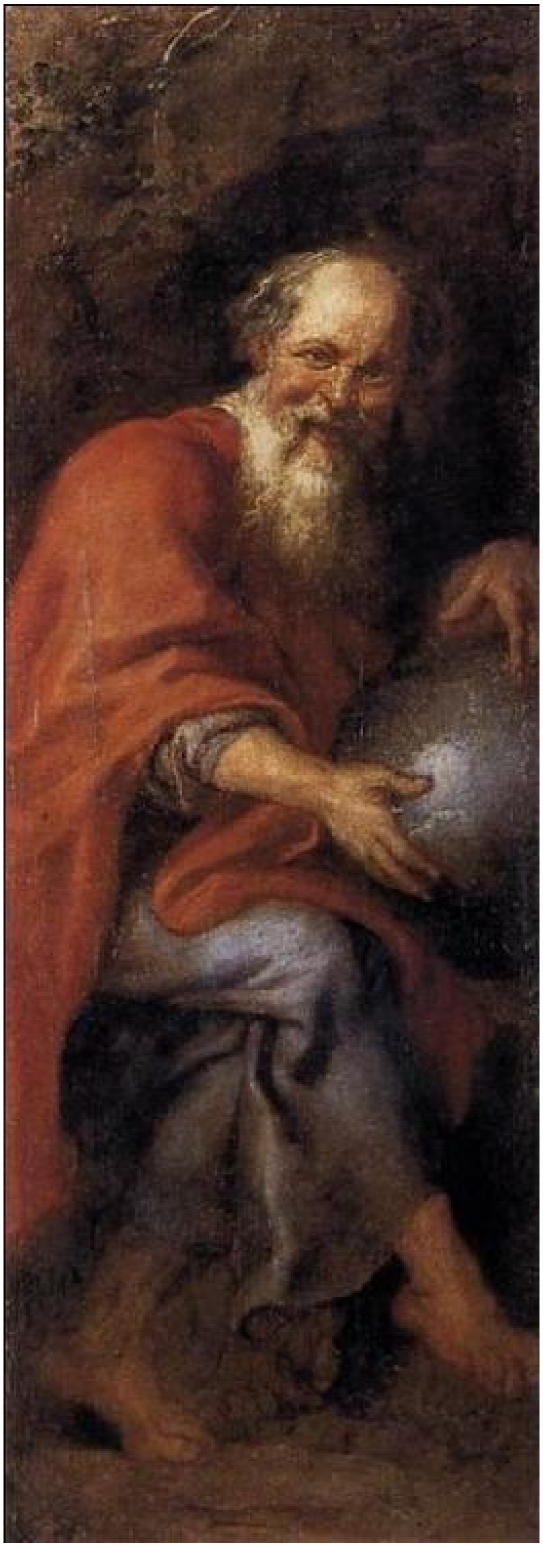
Charles V in Armour

1603
119 x 93 cm
Private Collection



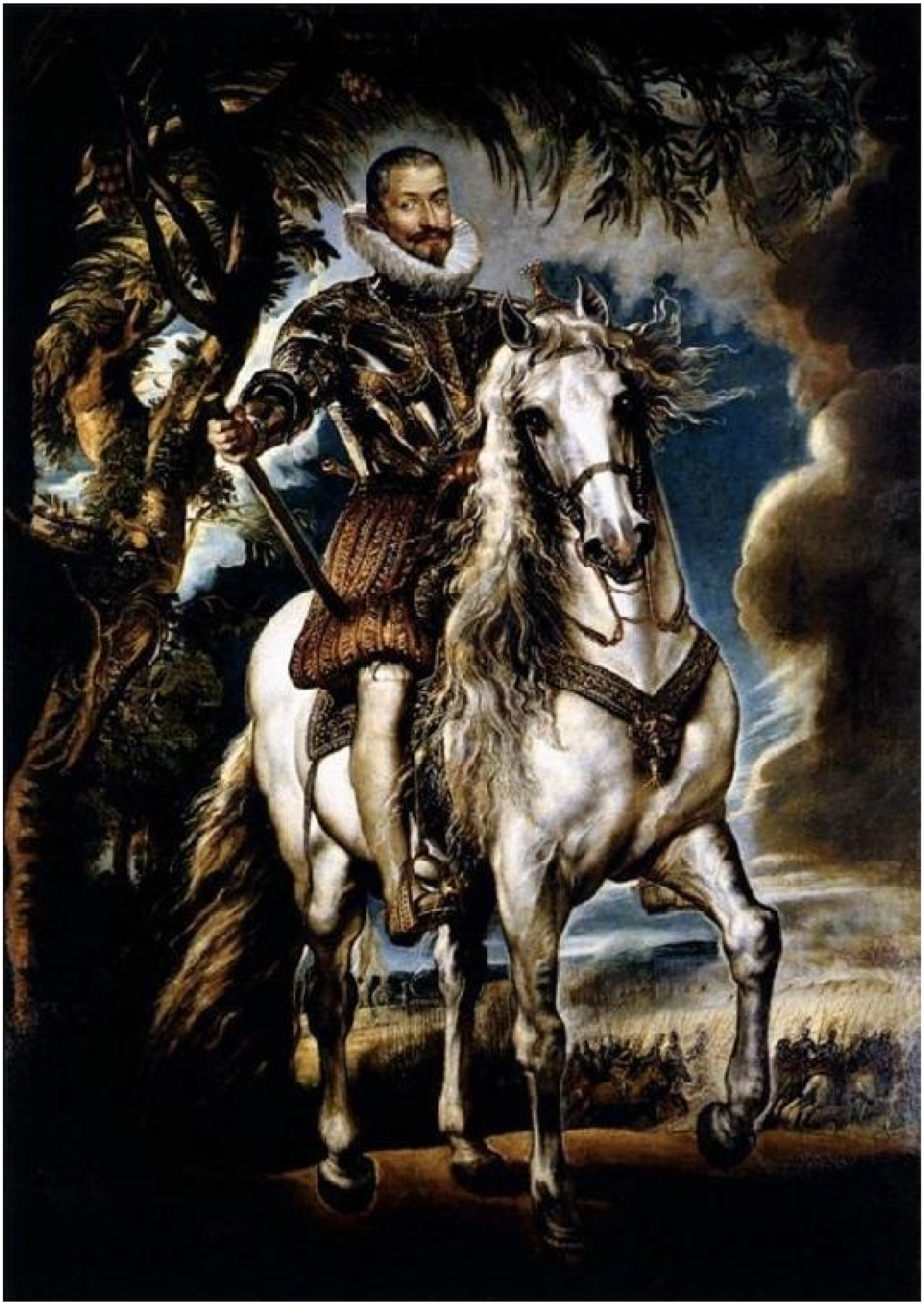
Democritus

1603
179 x 66 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



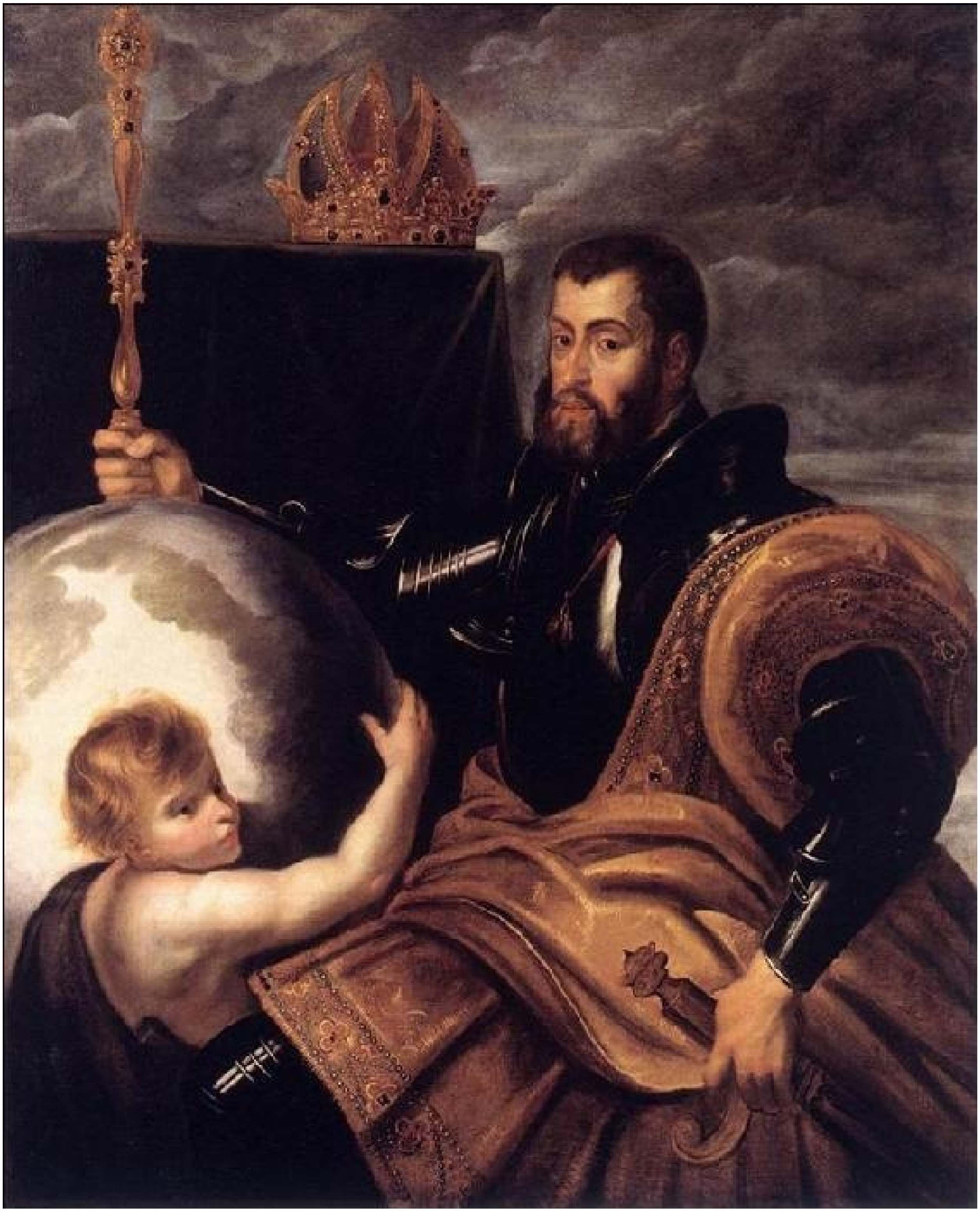
Equestrian Portrait of the Duke of Lerma

1603
283 x 200 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



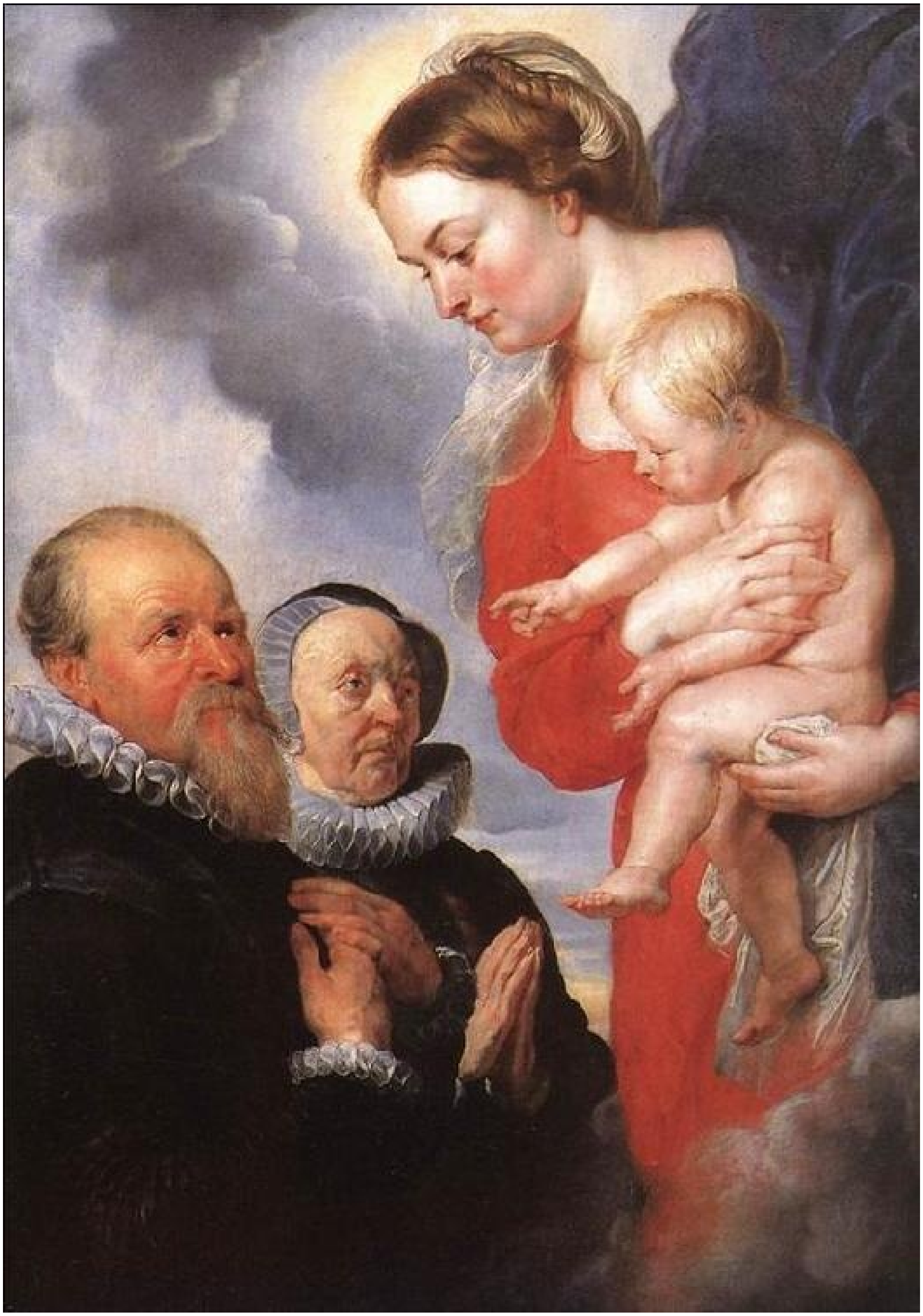
Allegory on Emperor Charles as Ruler of Vast Realms

c.1604
167 x 141 cm
Residenzgalerie, Salzburg, Austria



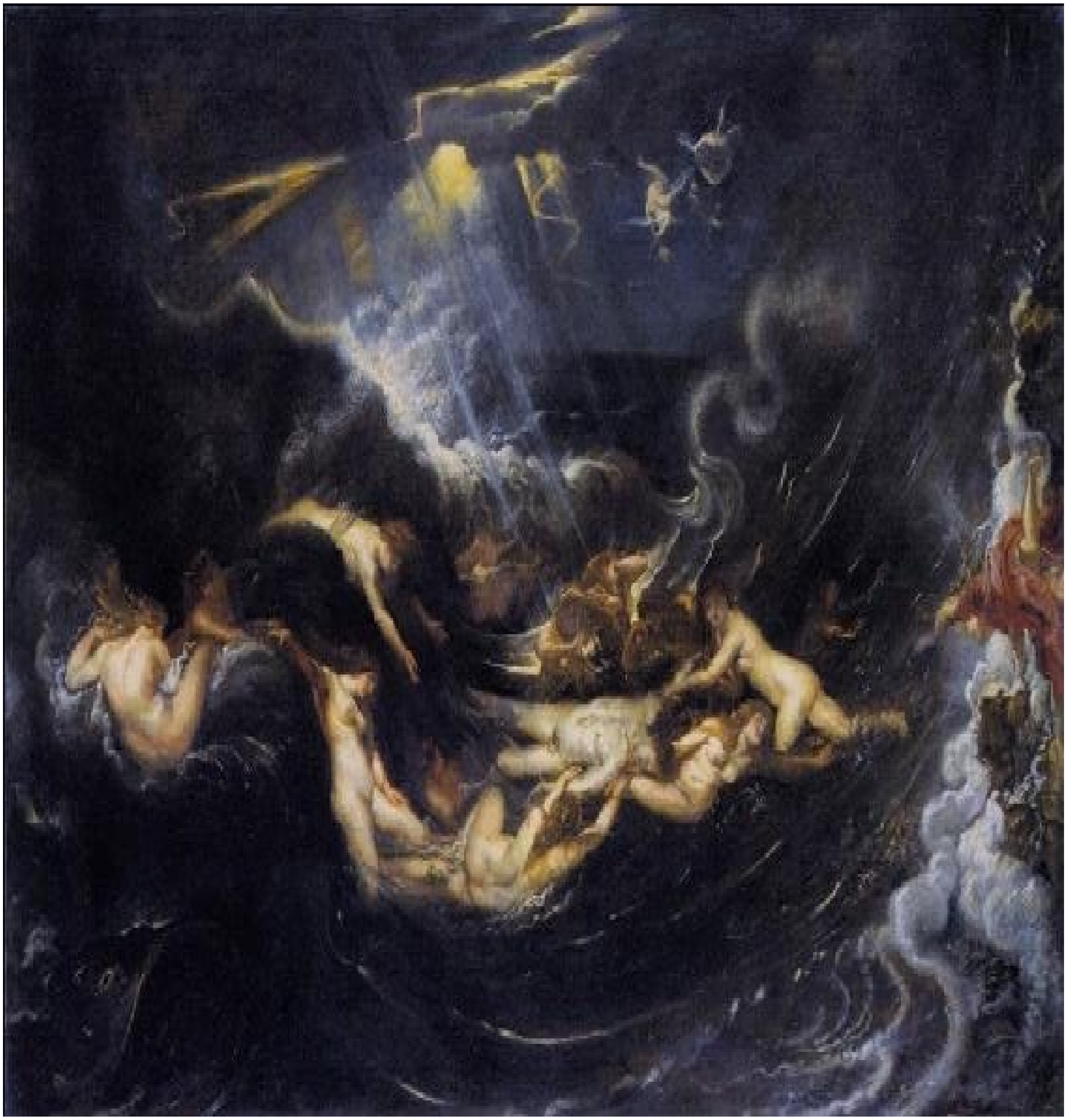
Virgin and Child

c. 1604
Oil on panel
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours



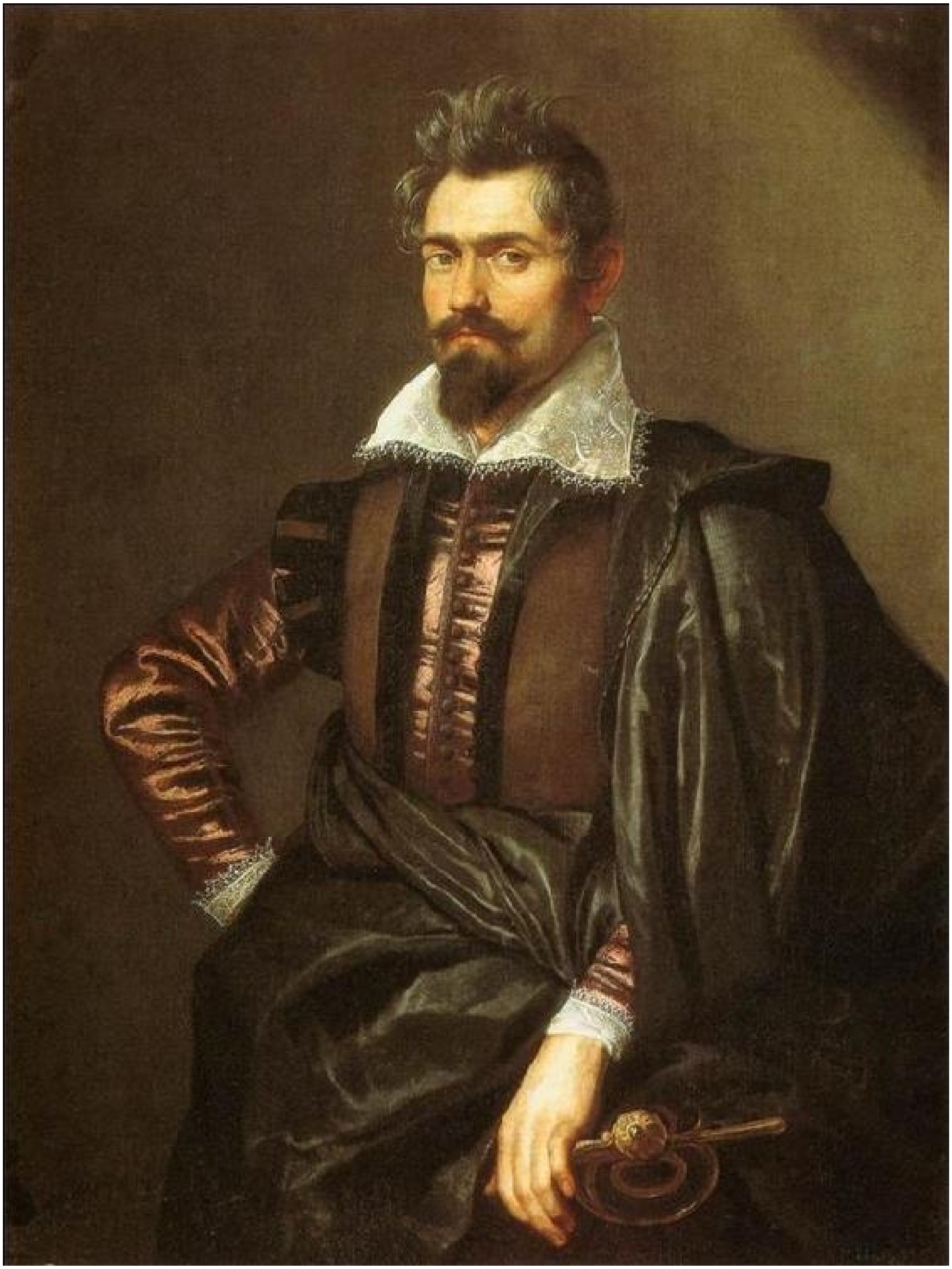
Hero and Leander

c.1605
96 x 127 cm



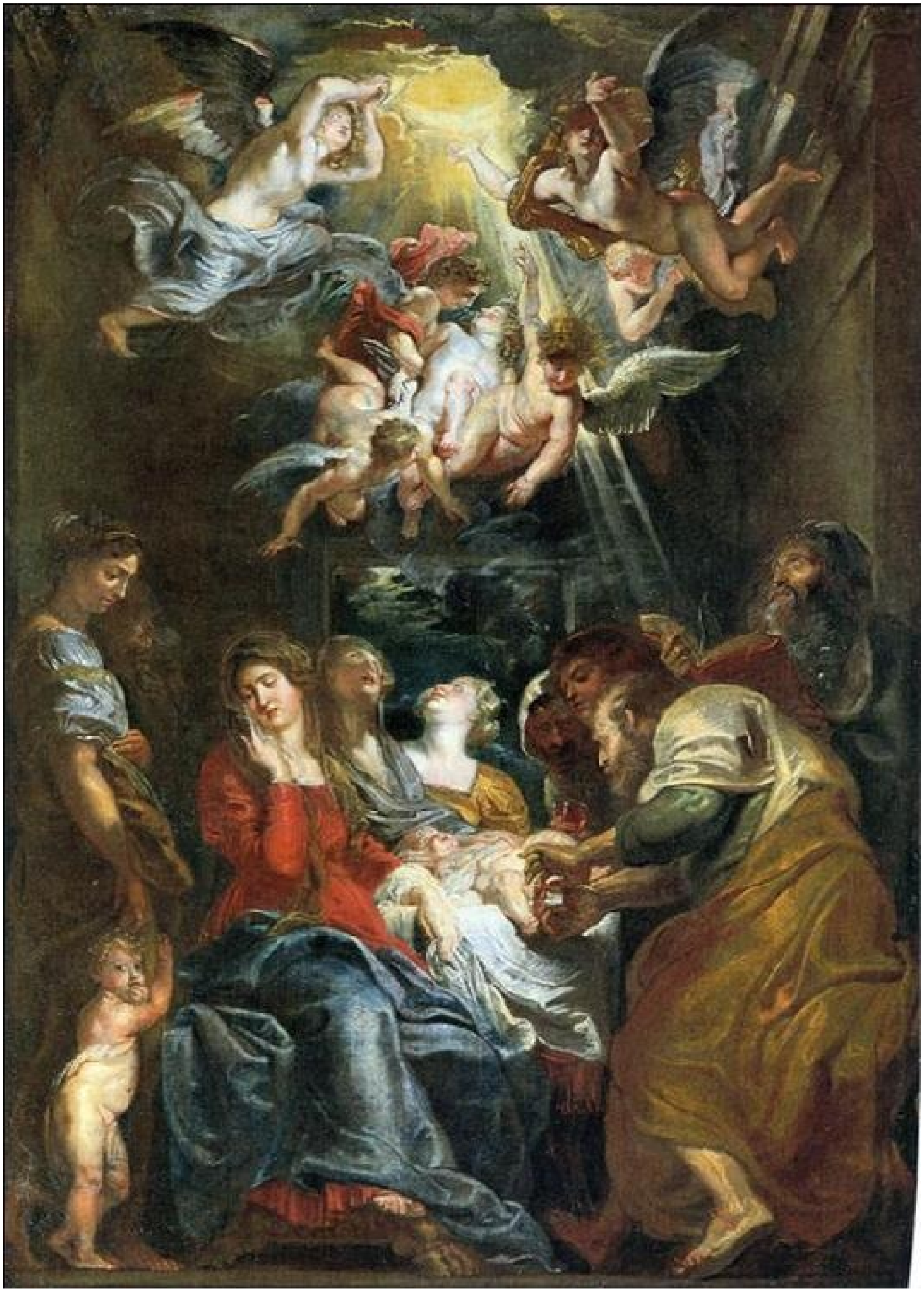
Portrait of Gaspard Schoppins

c.1605
116 x 88 cm



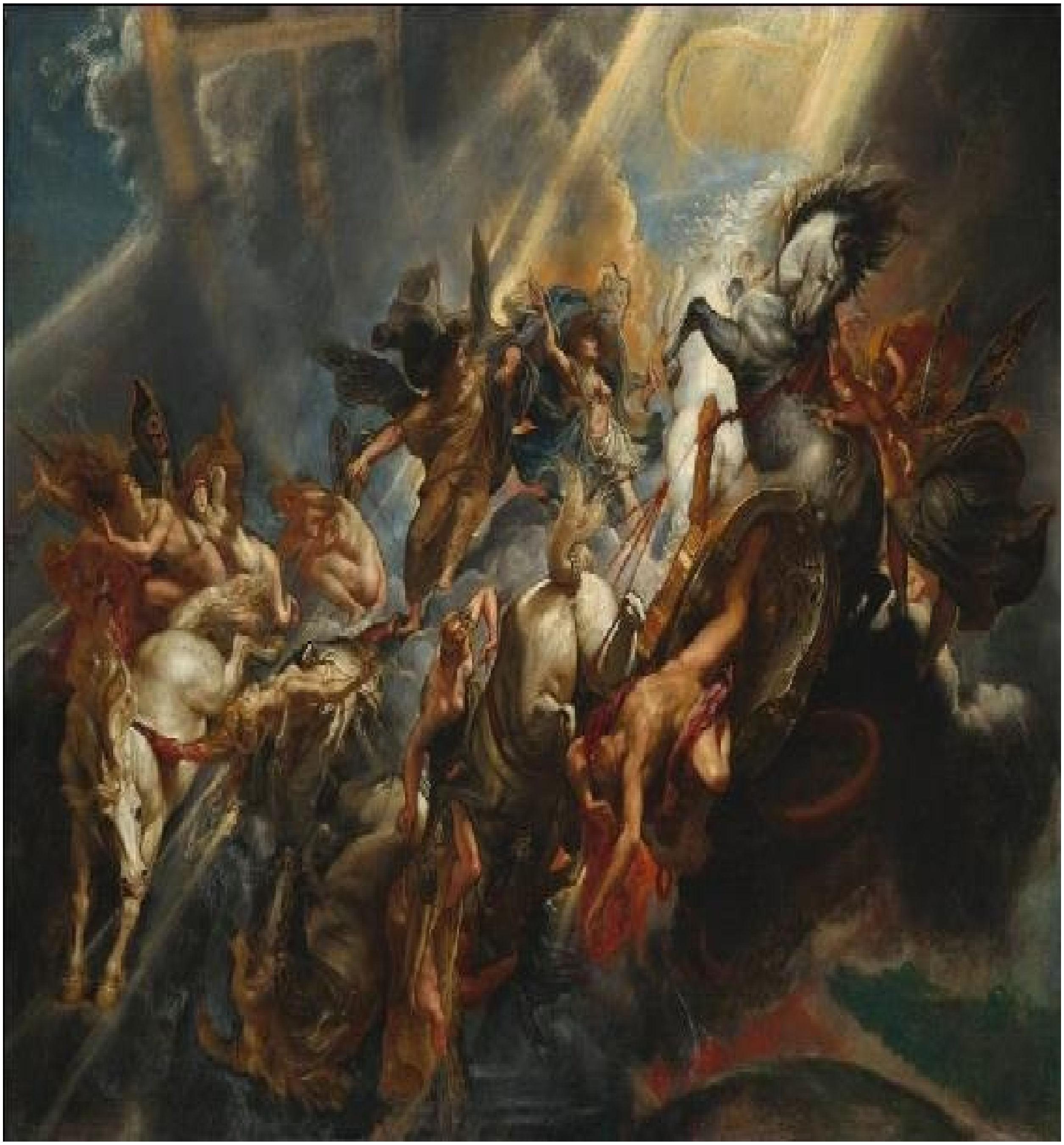
The Circumcision of Christ

c.1605
105 x 74 cm
Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria



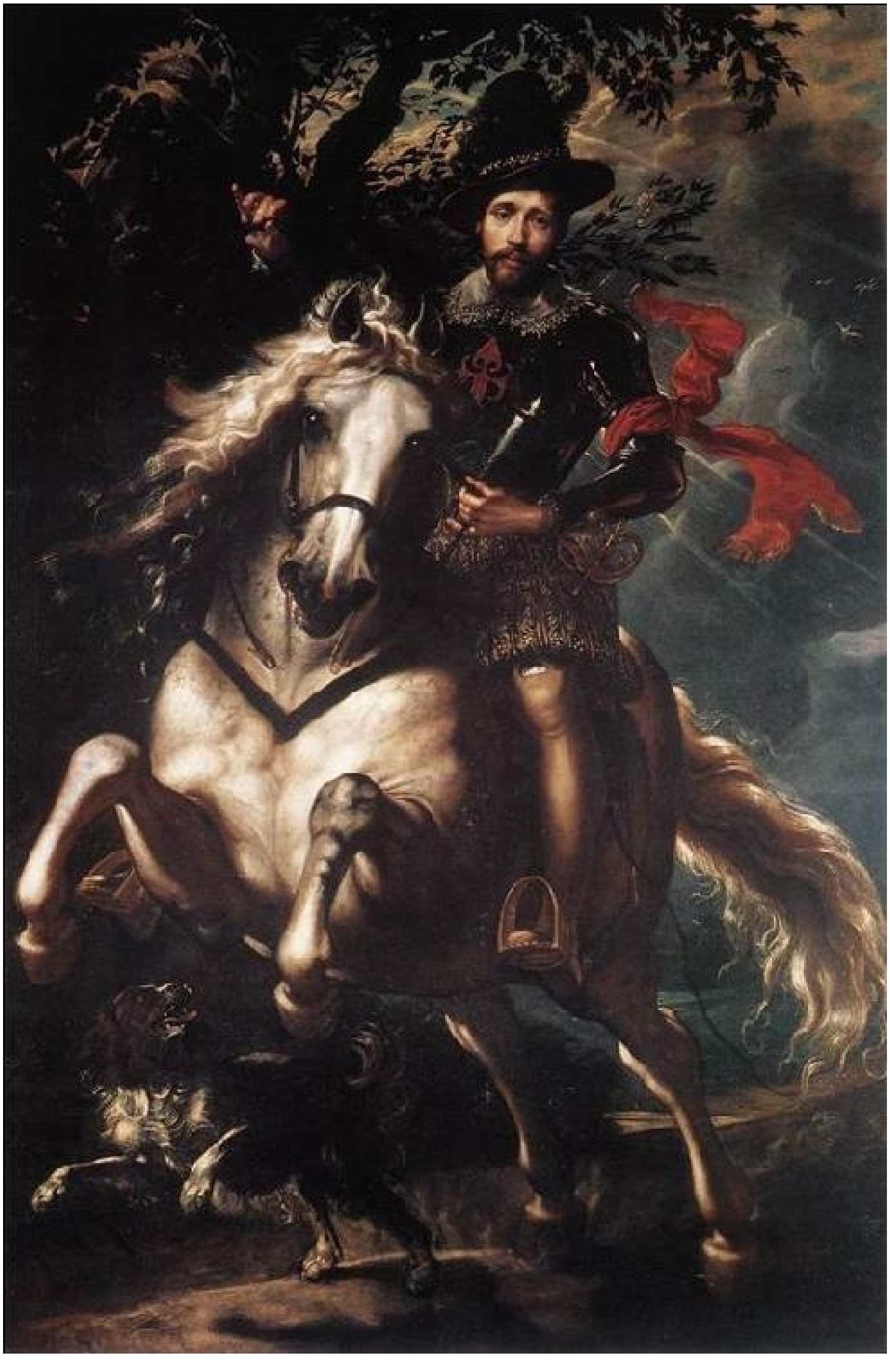
The Fall of Phaeton

c.1605
National Gallery of Art, Washingon, DC, USA



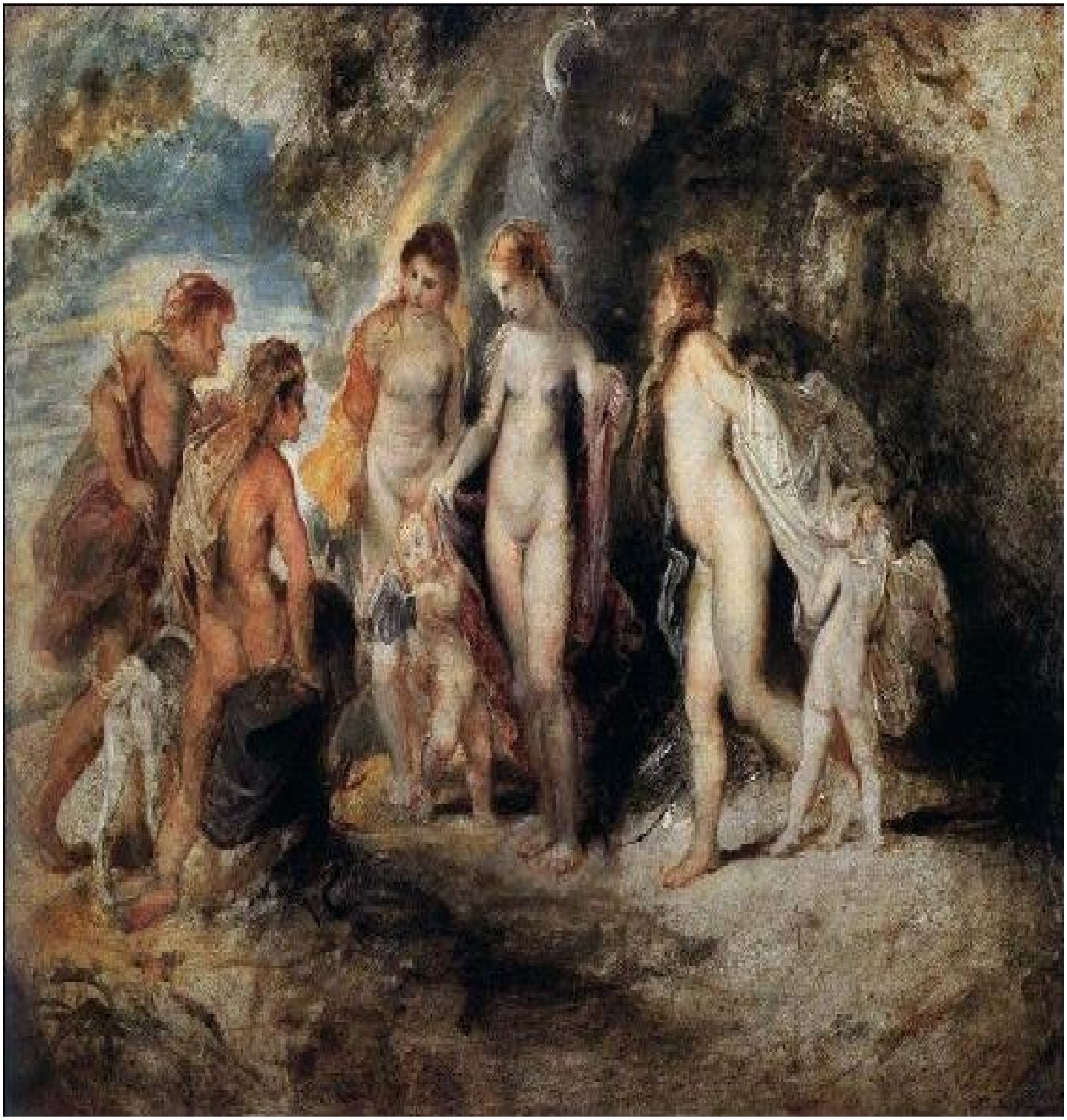
Equestrian Portrait of Giancarlo Doria

c.1606
265 x 188 cm



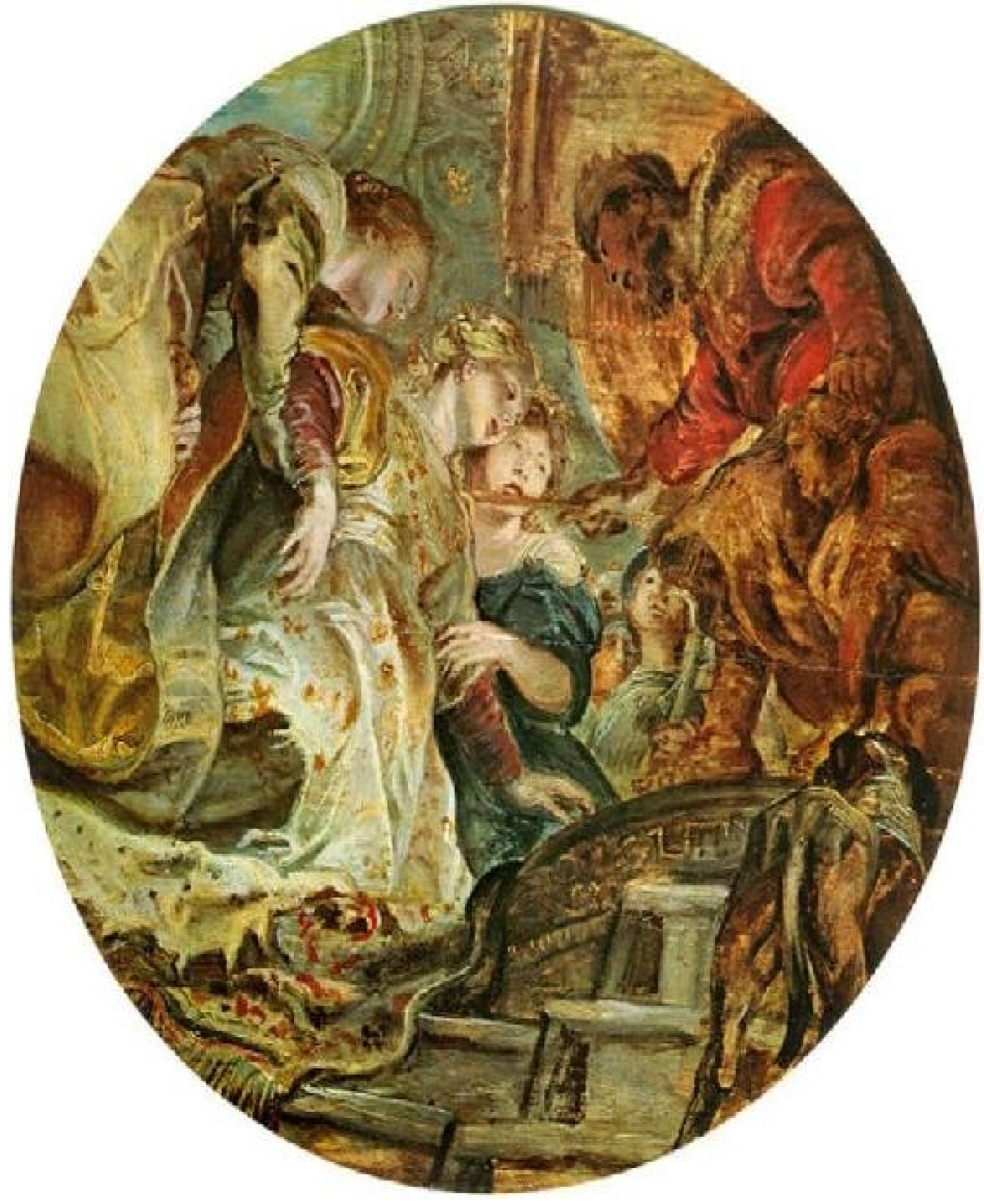
The Judgment of Paris

1606
Oil on copper, 34 x 45 cm
Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna



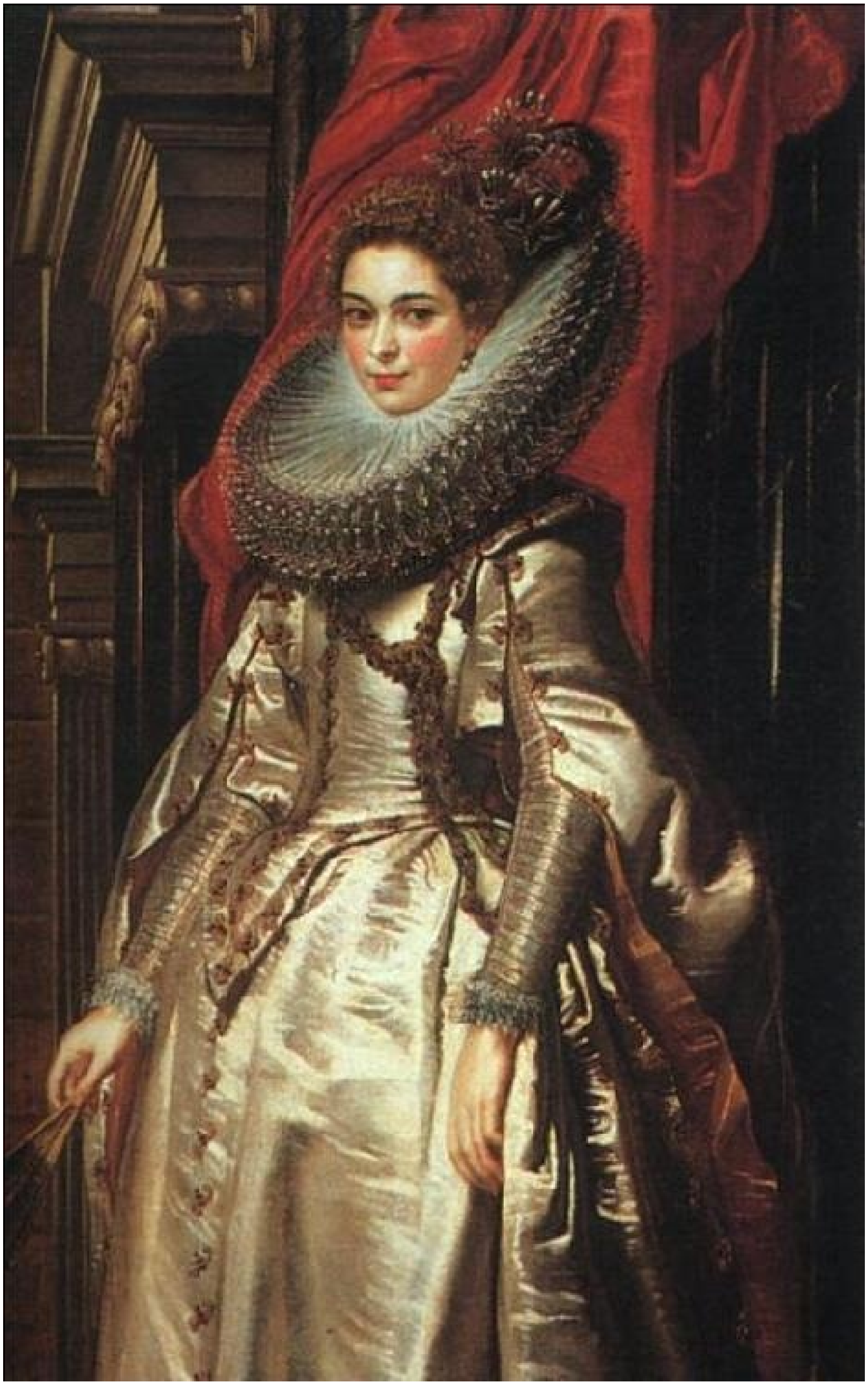
Esther and Ahasverus

1606
Oil on wood,
33 x 32 cm
Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna



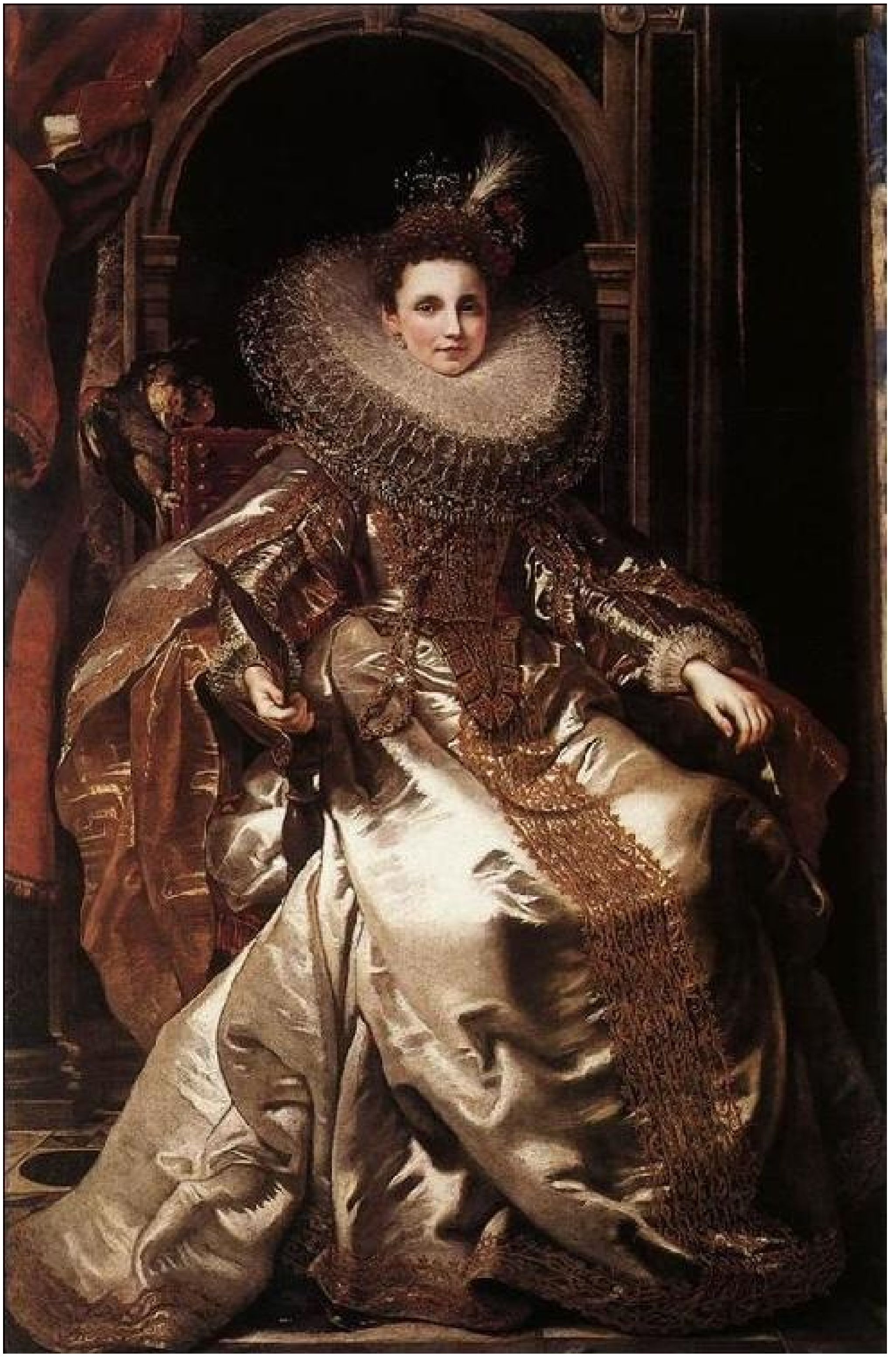
Marchesa Brigida Spinola Doria

1606
153 x 99 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA



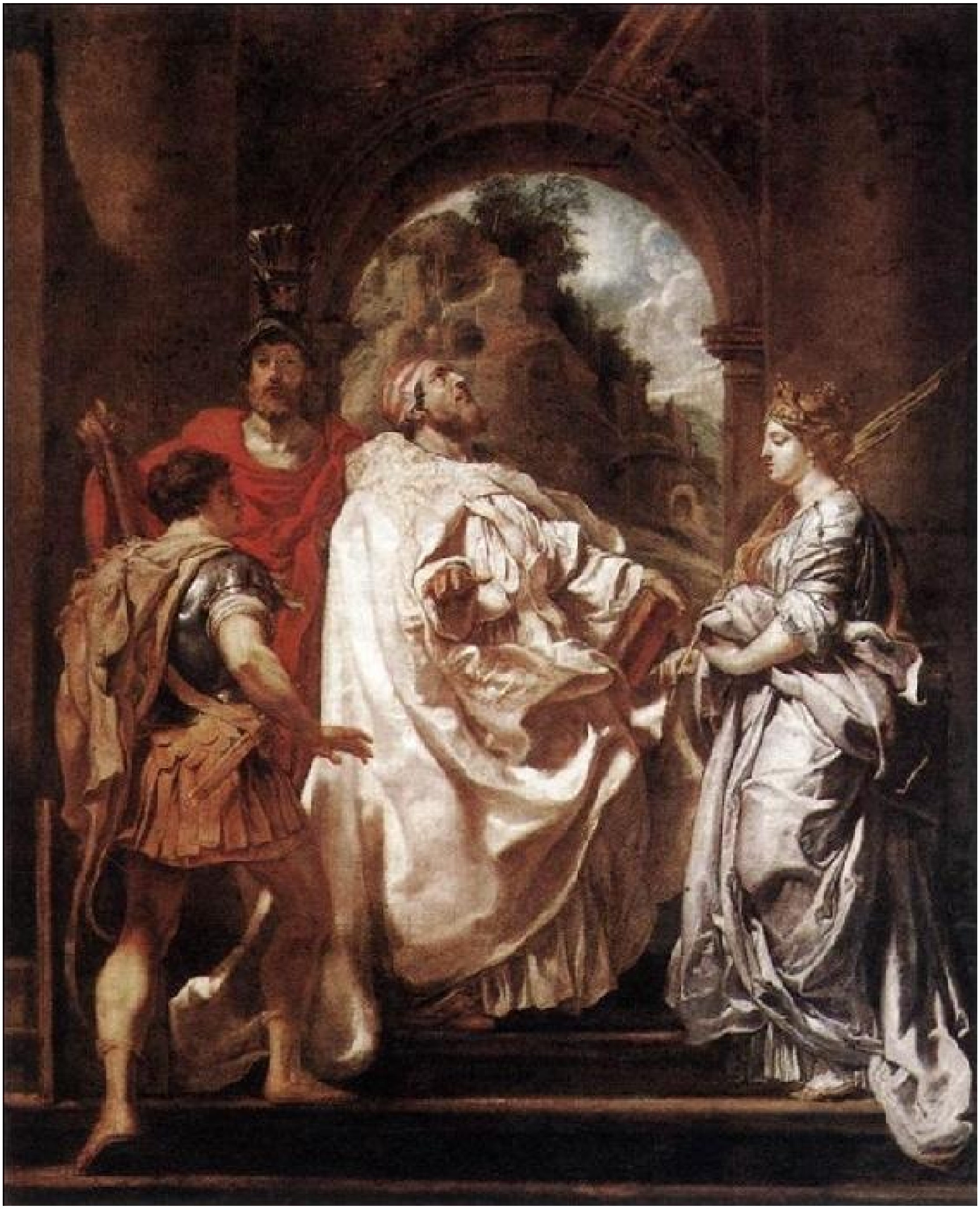
Portrait of Maria Serra Pallavicino

1606
241 x 140 cm
Private Collection



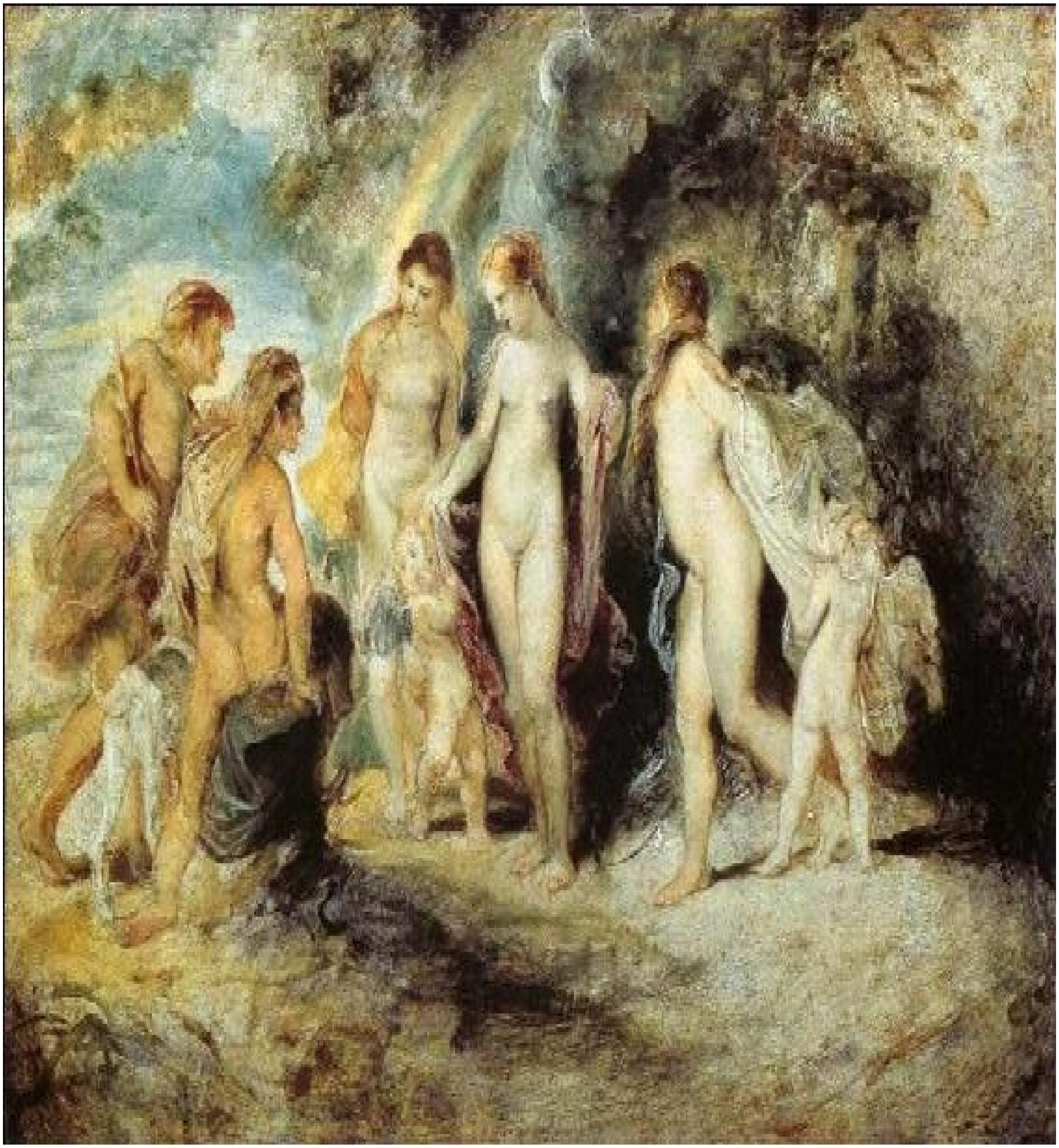
St. Gregory the Great with Saints

1606
146 x 119 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany



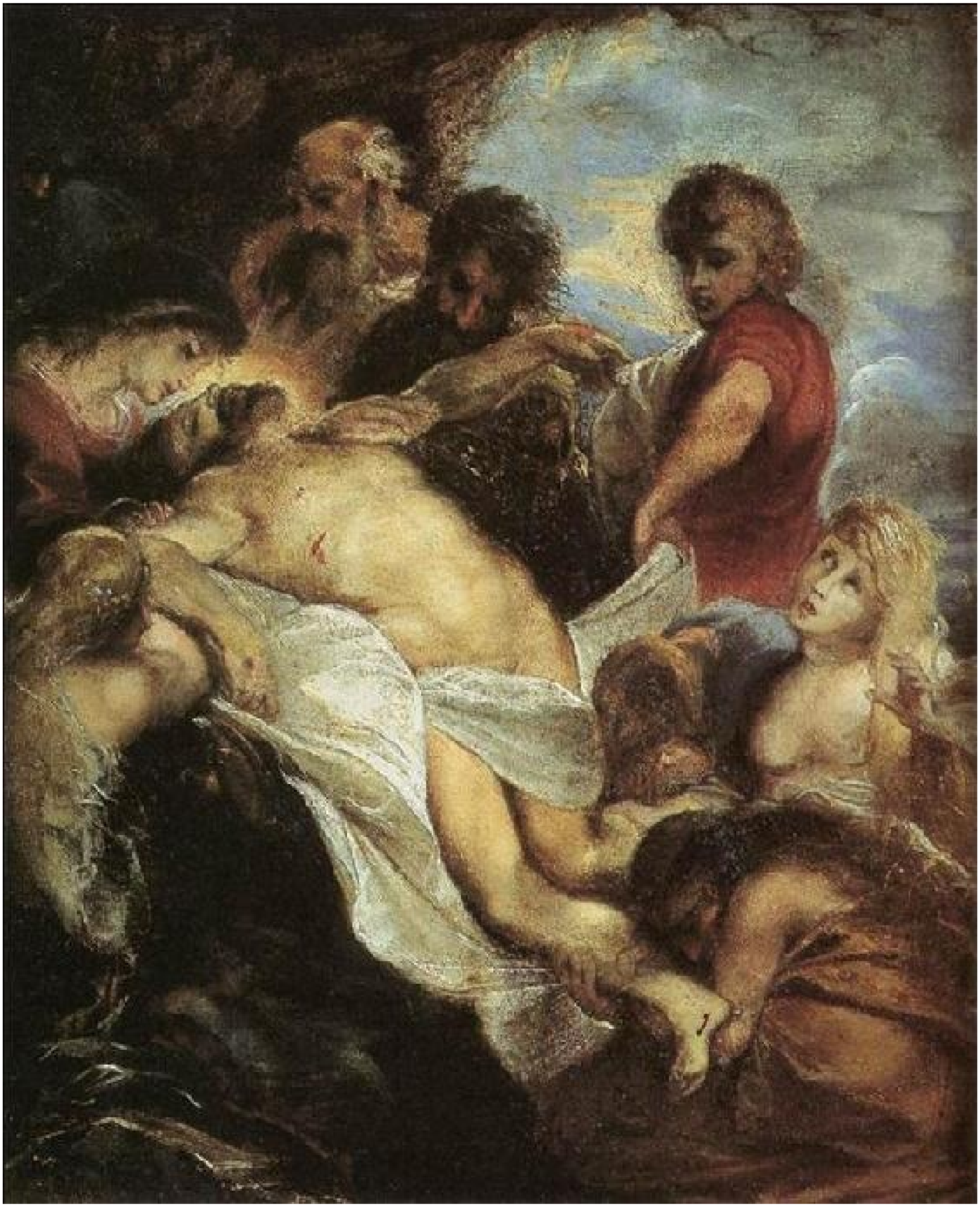
The Judgement of Paris

1606
32.5 x 43.5 cm
Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria



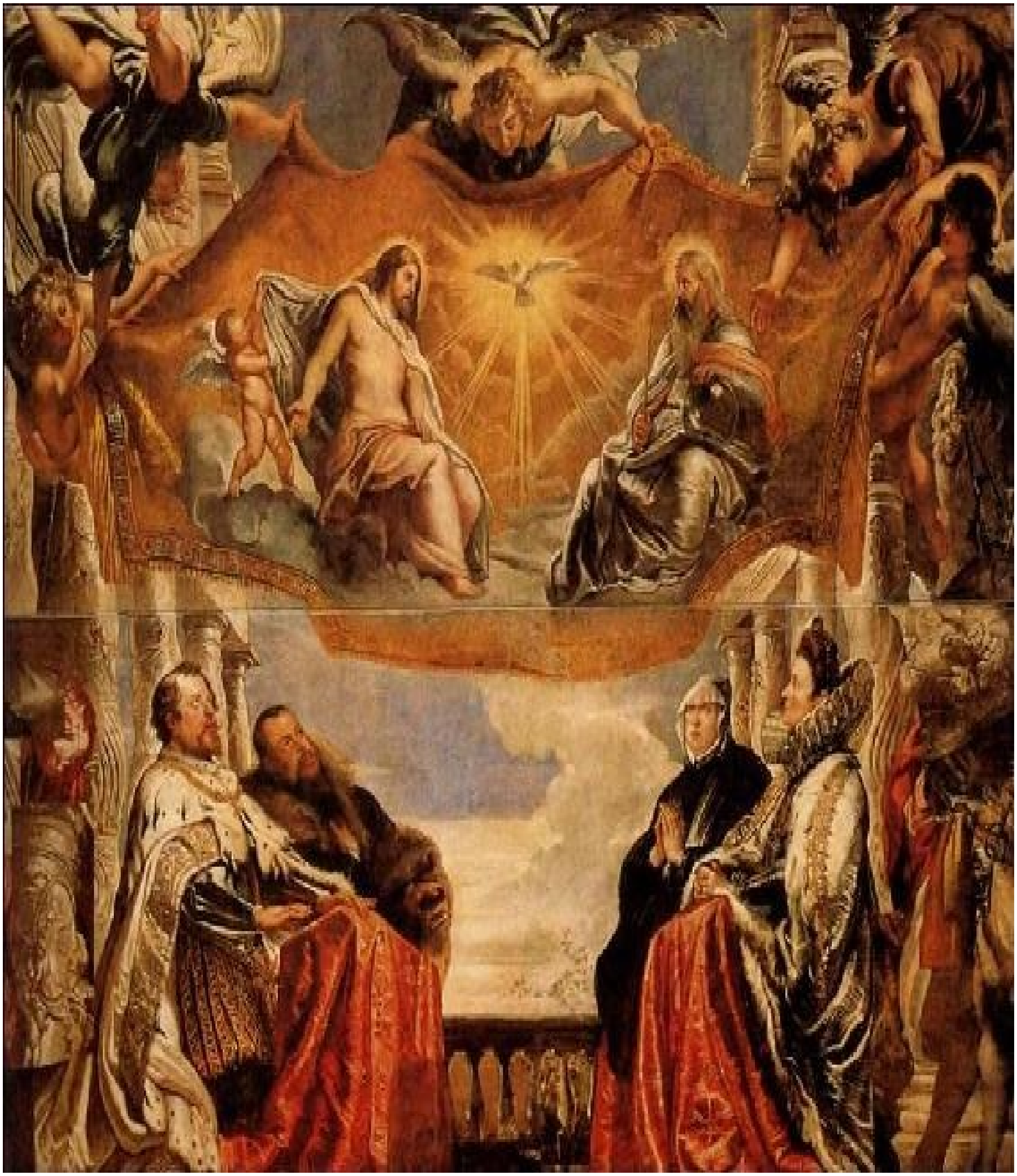
The Lamentation

c.1606
28 x 24 cm
Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, Jacksonville, Florida, USA



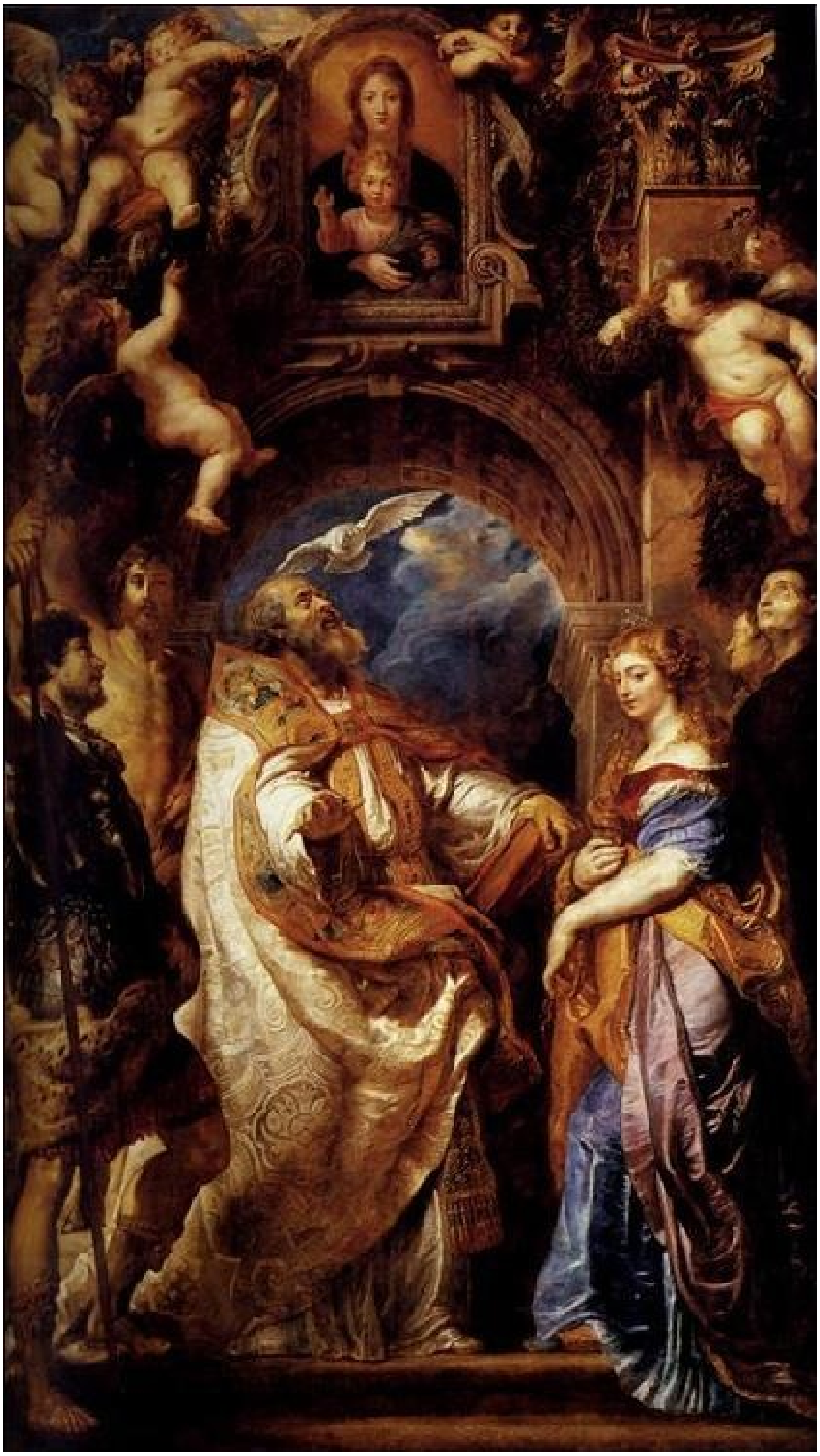
The Trinity Adored By The Duke of Mantua And His Family

c.1606
190 x 250 cm
Private Collection



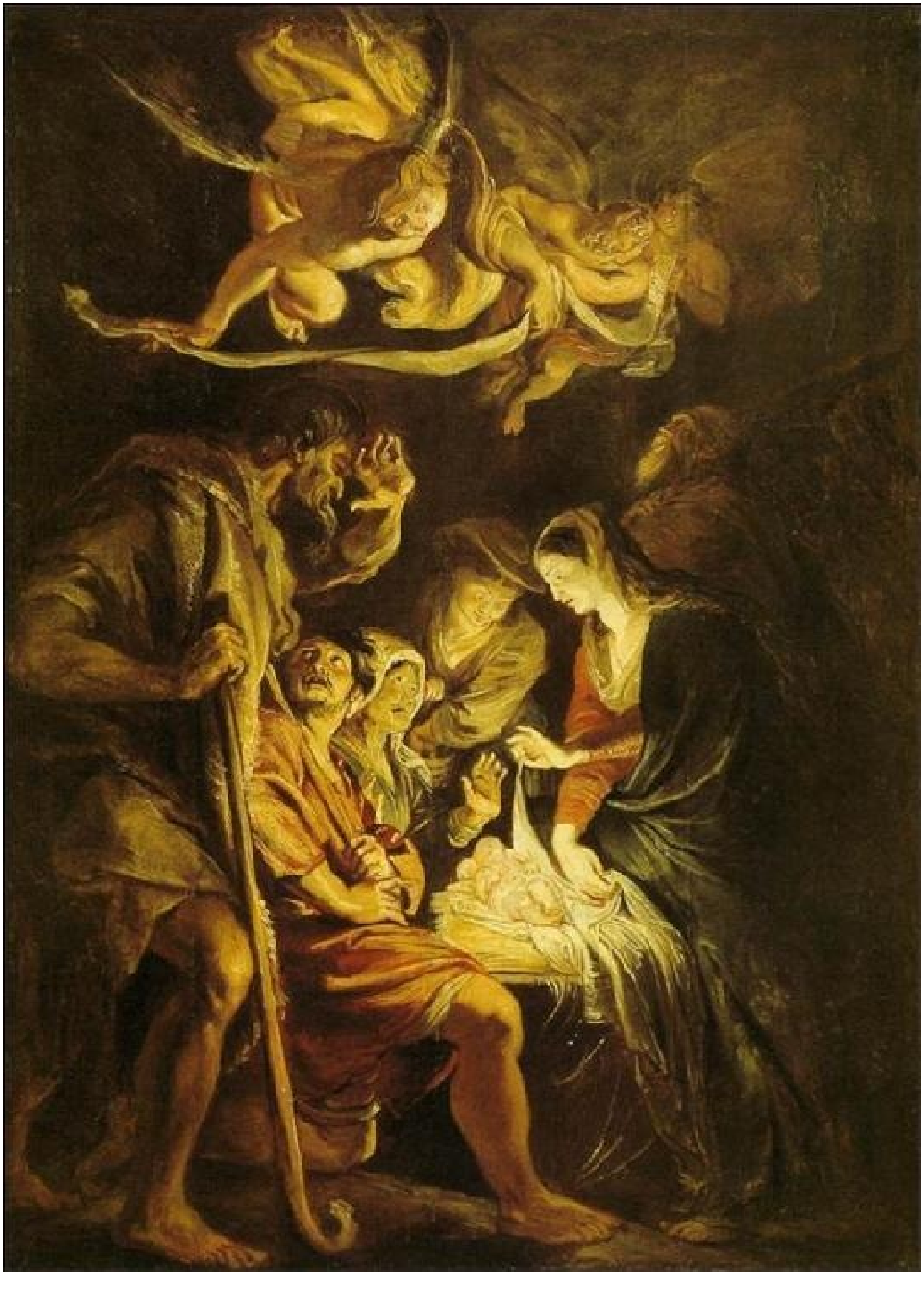
Saint Gregory with Saints Domitilla, Maurus, and Papianus

1607
477 x 288 cm



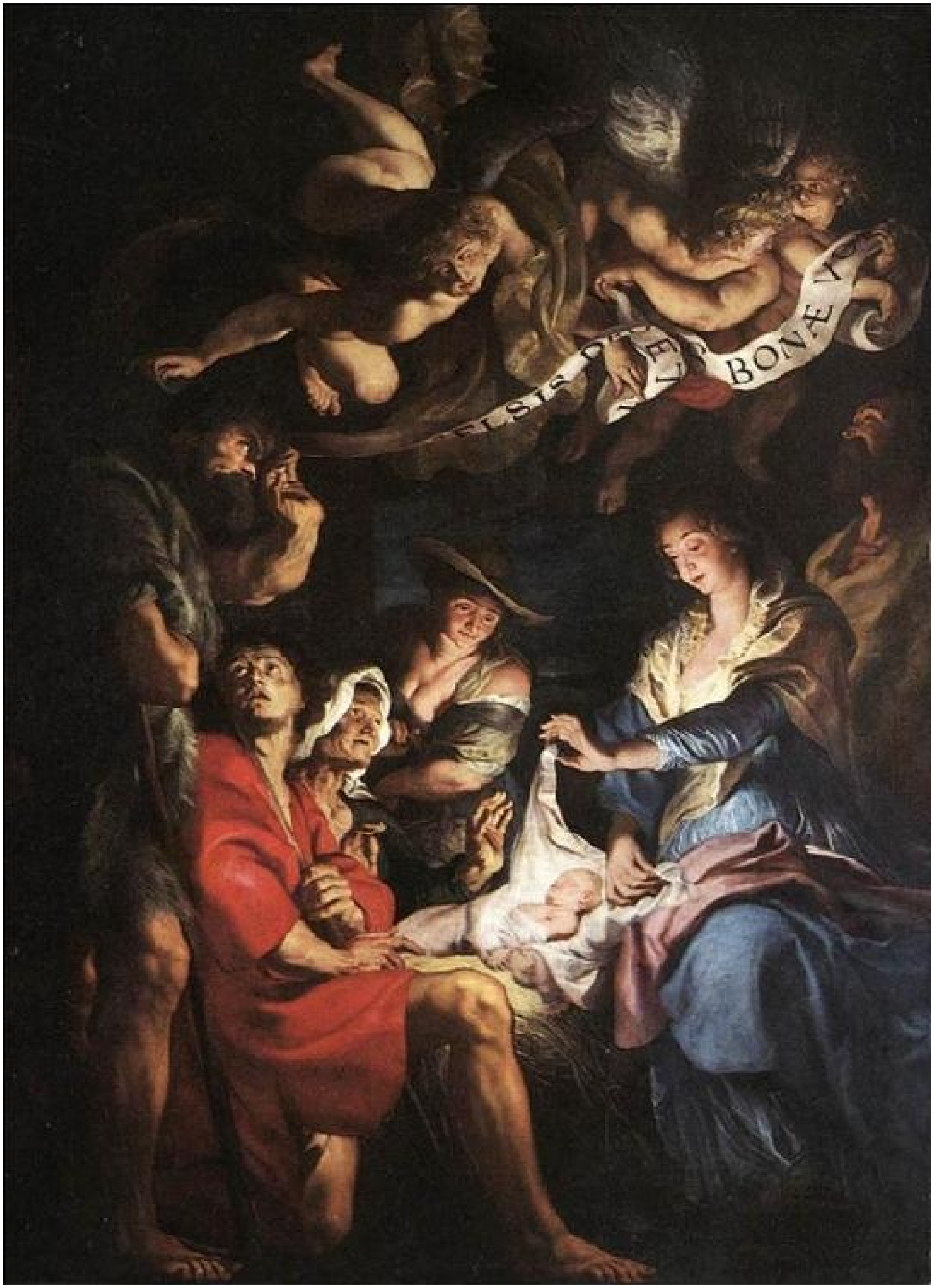
Adoration of the Shepherds

1608
64 x 47 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



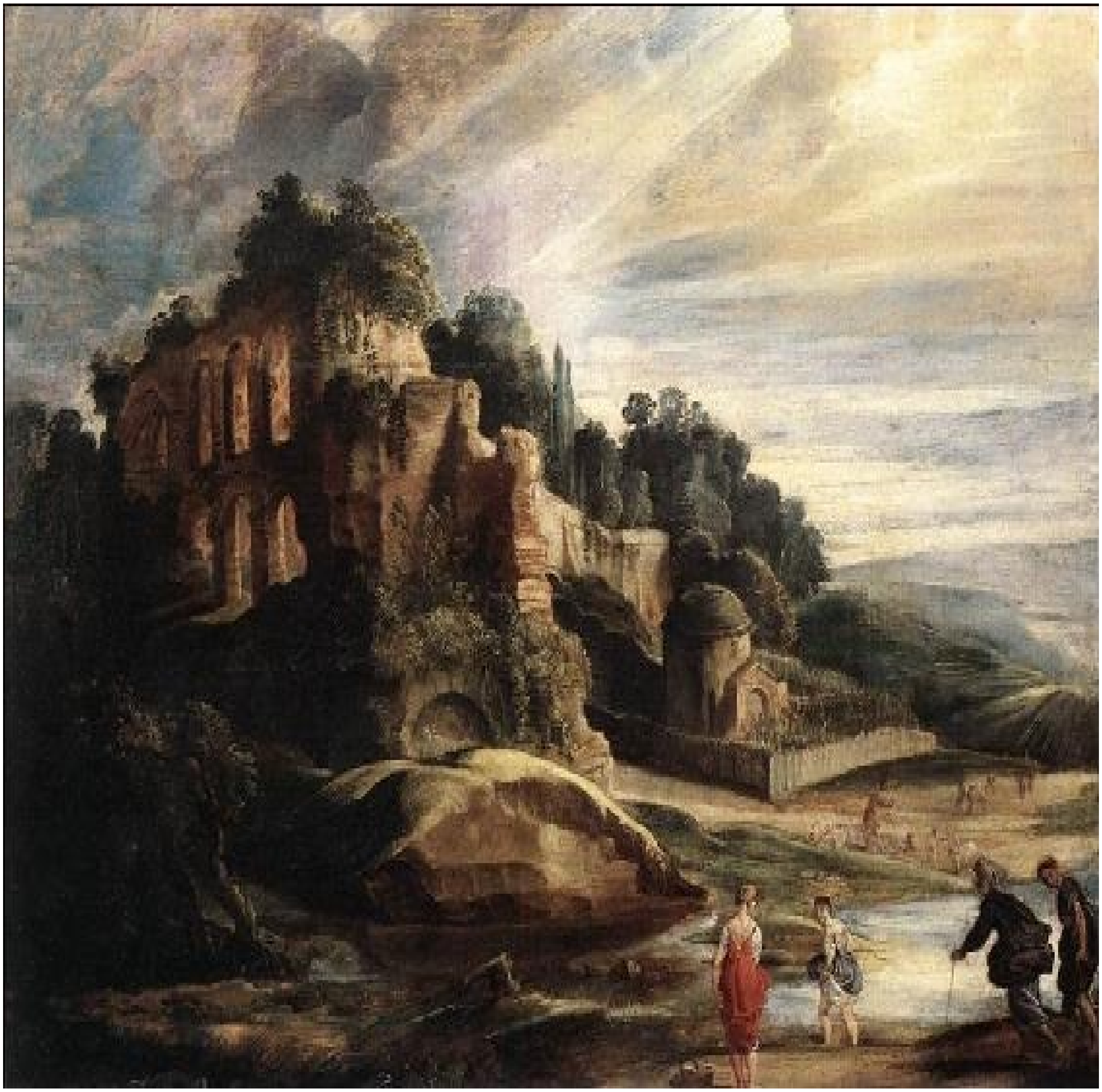
Adoration of the Shepherds

c.1608


ELSIS
BONÆ VO

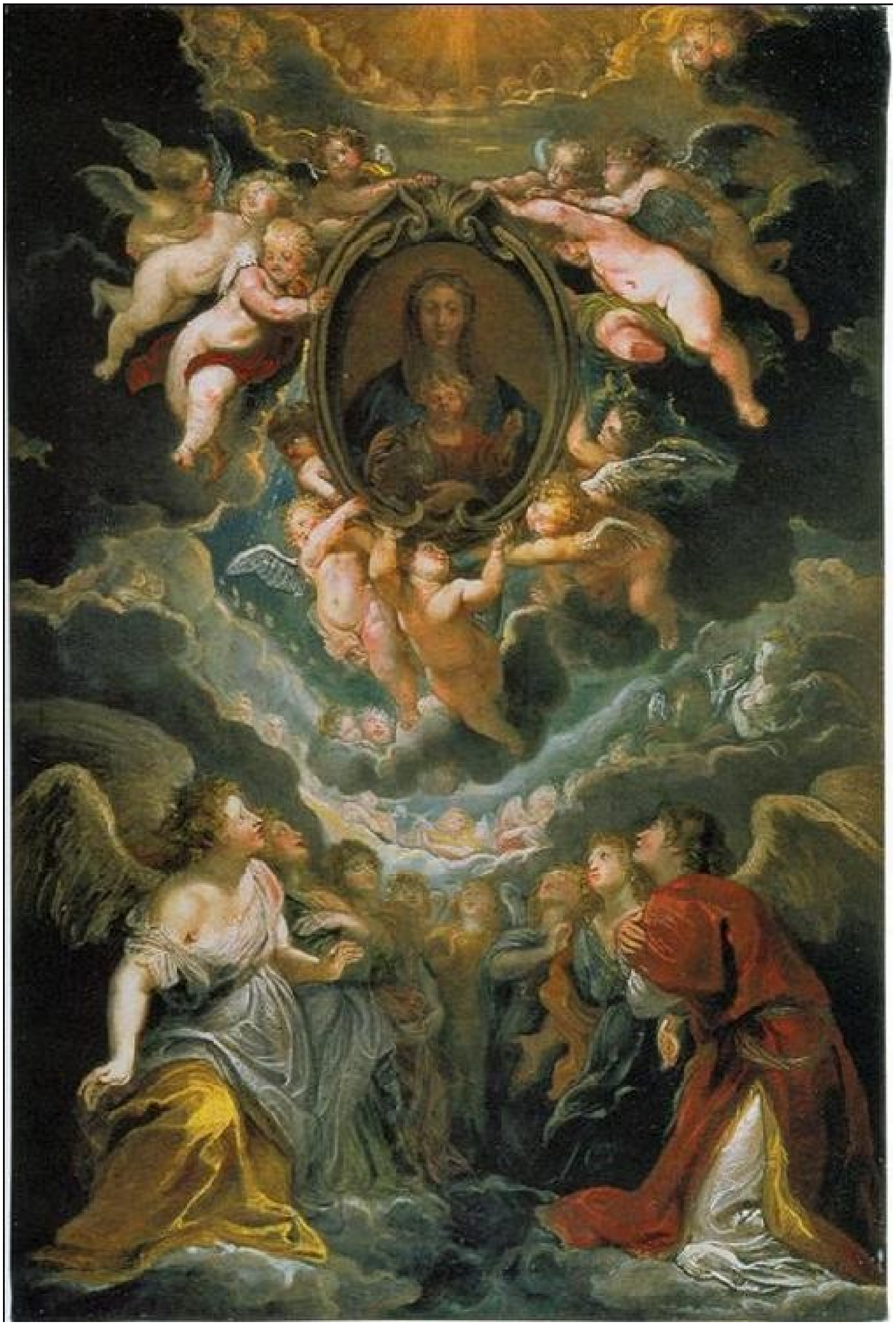
Landscape with the Ruins of Mount Palatine in Rome

c.1608
107 x 76 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



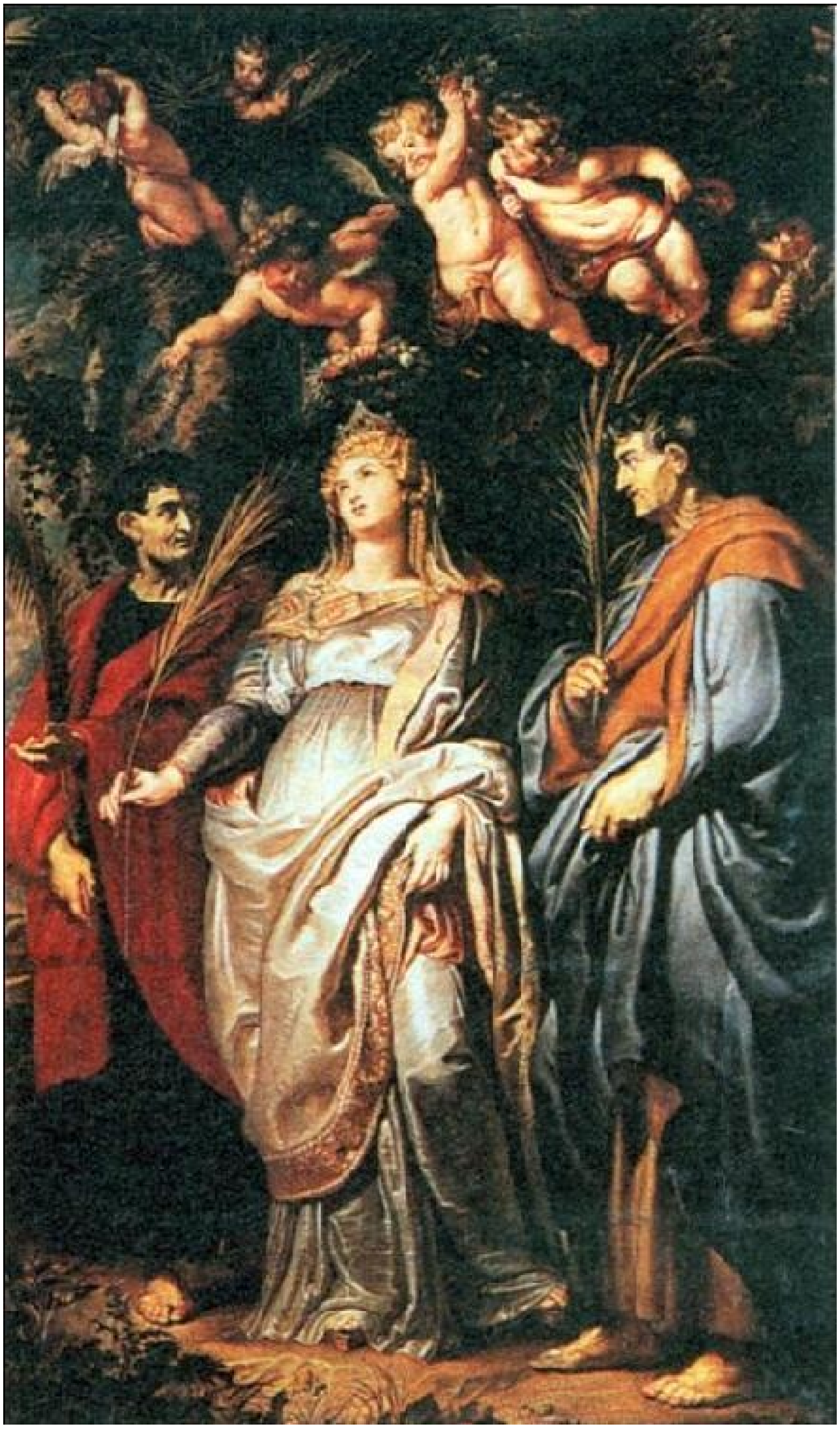
Madonna della Vallicella

1608
86 x 57 cm



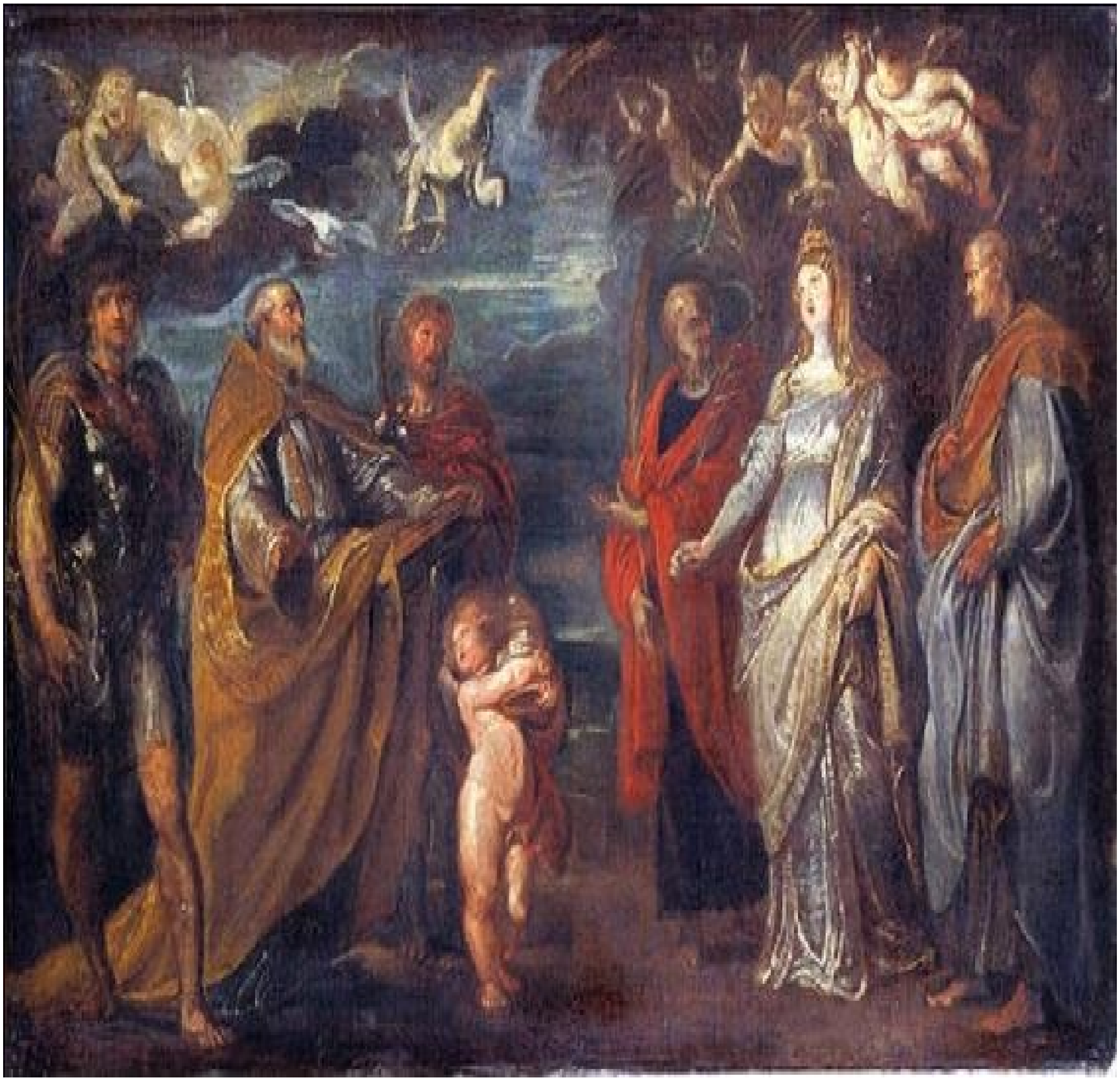
St. Domitilla with St. Nereus and St. Achilleus

1608
Santa Maria in Vallicella, Rome, Italy



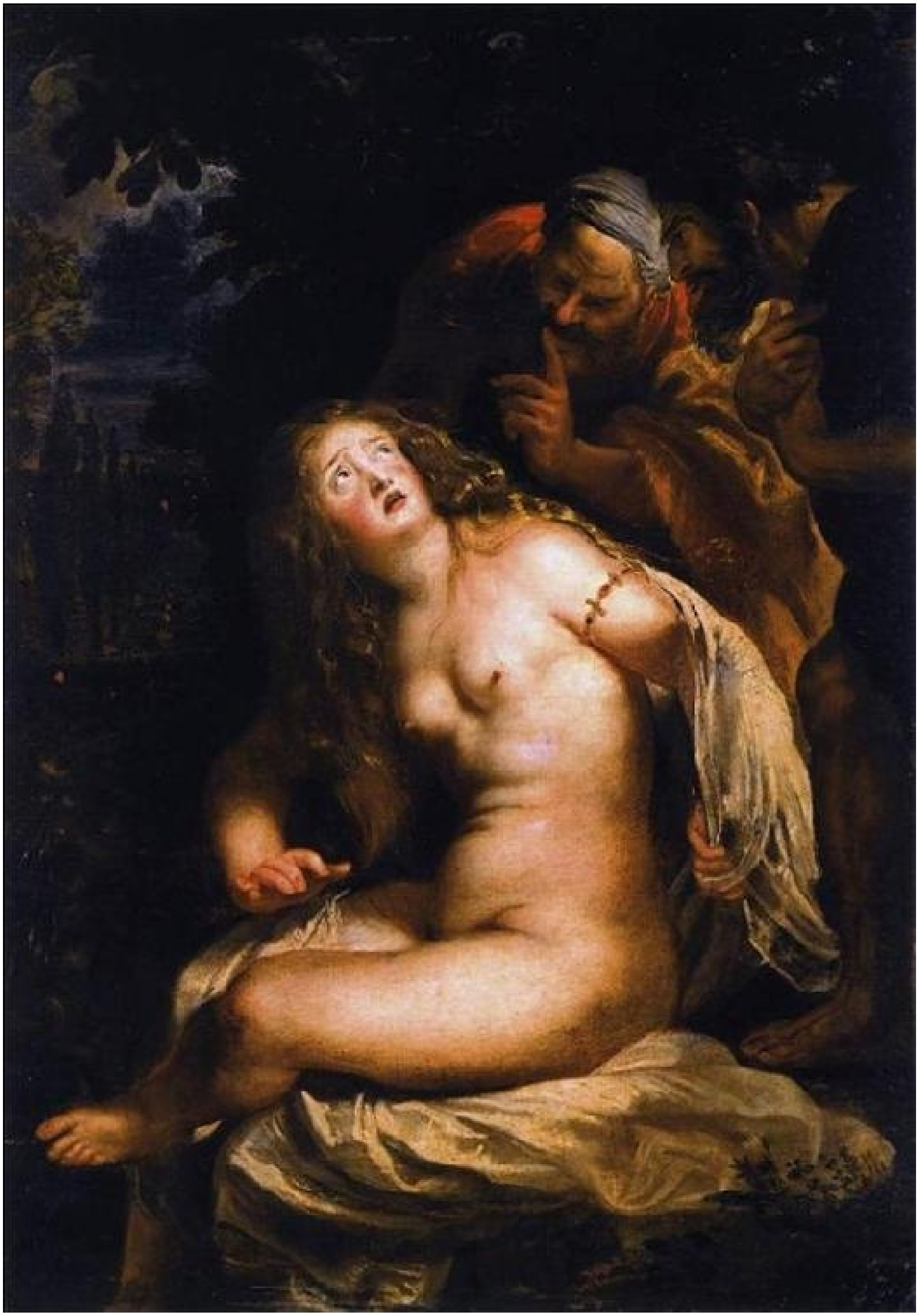
St. George with Martyrs Maurus, Papianus, Domitilla, Nerus and Achilleus

1608
44 x 66 cm



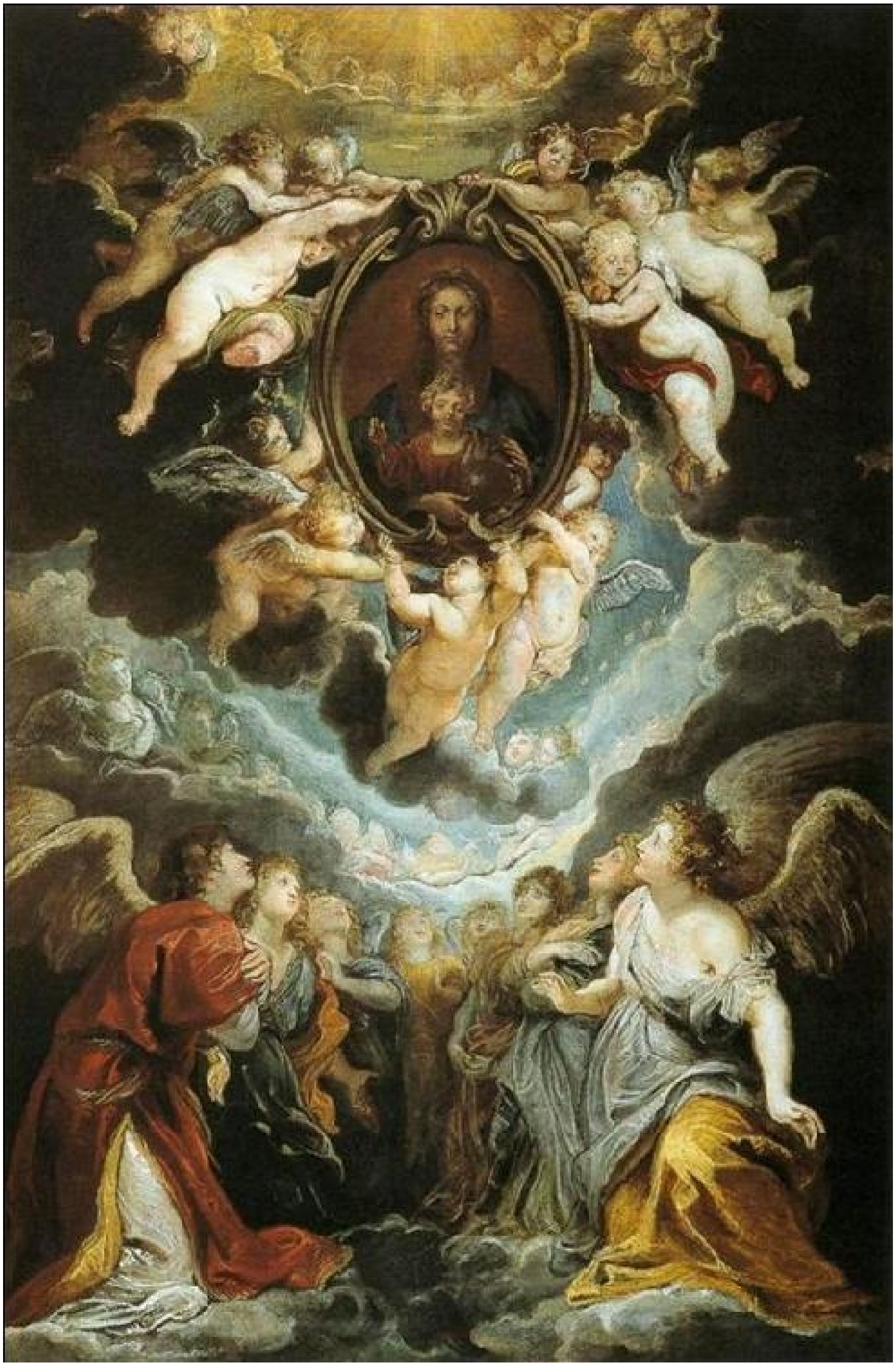
Susanna and the Elders

c.1608
98 x 66 cm
Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy



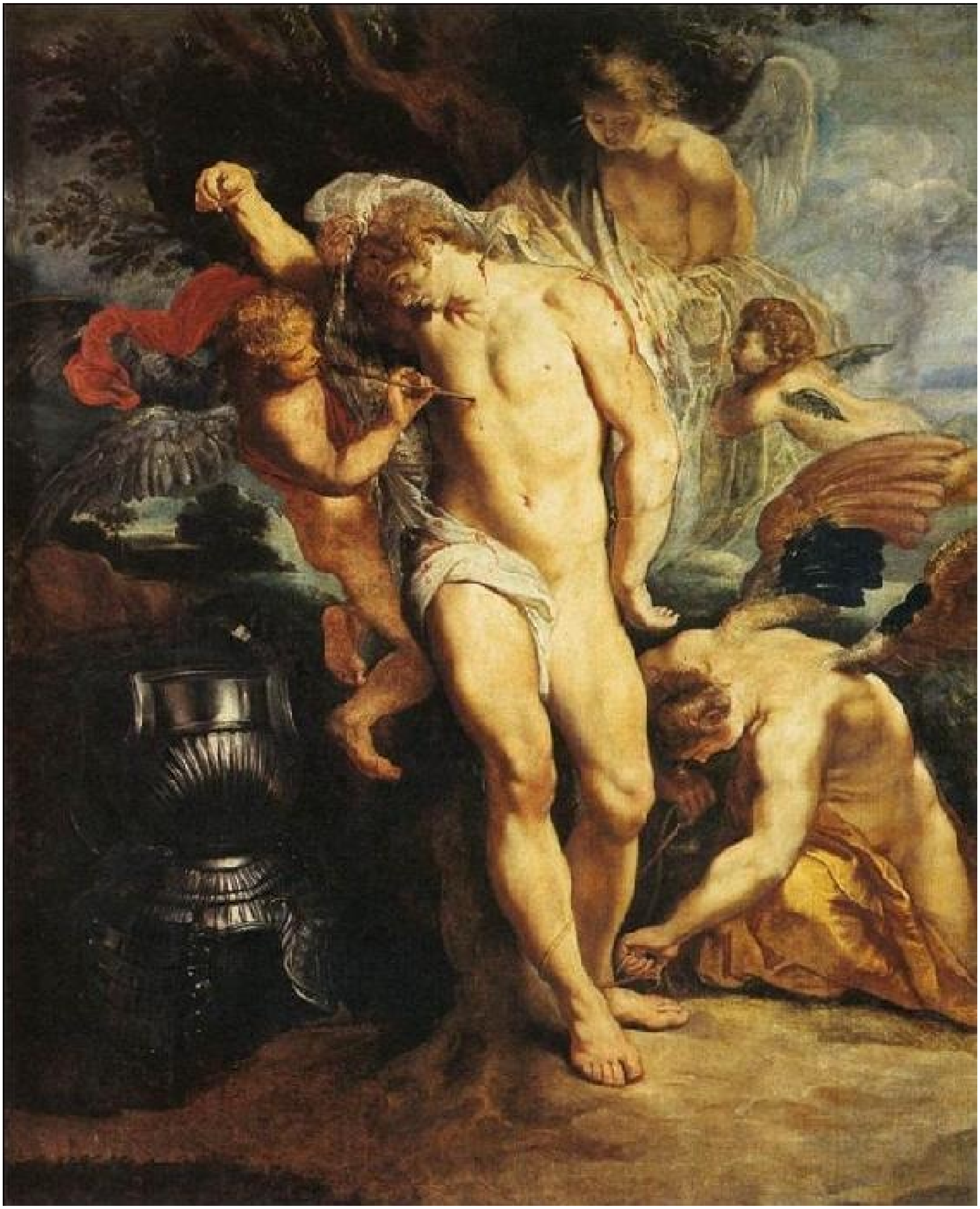
The Madonna della Vallicella Adored by Seraphim and Cherubim

1608
119 x 86 cm
Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria



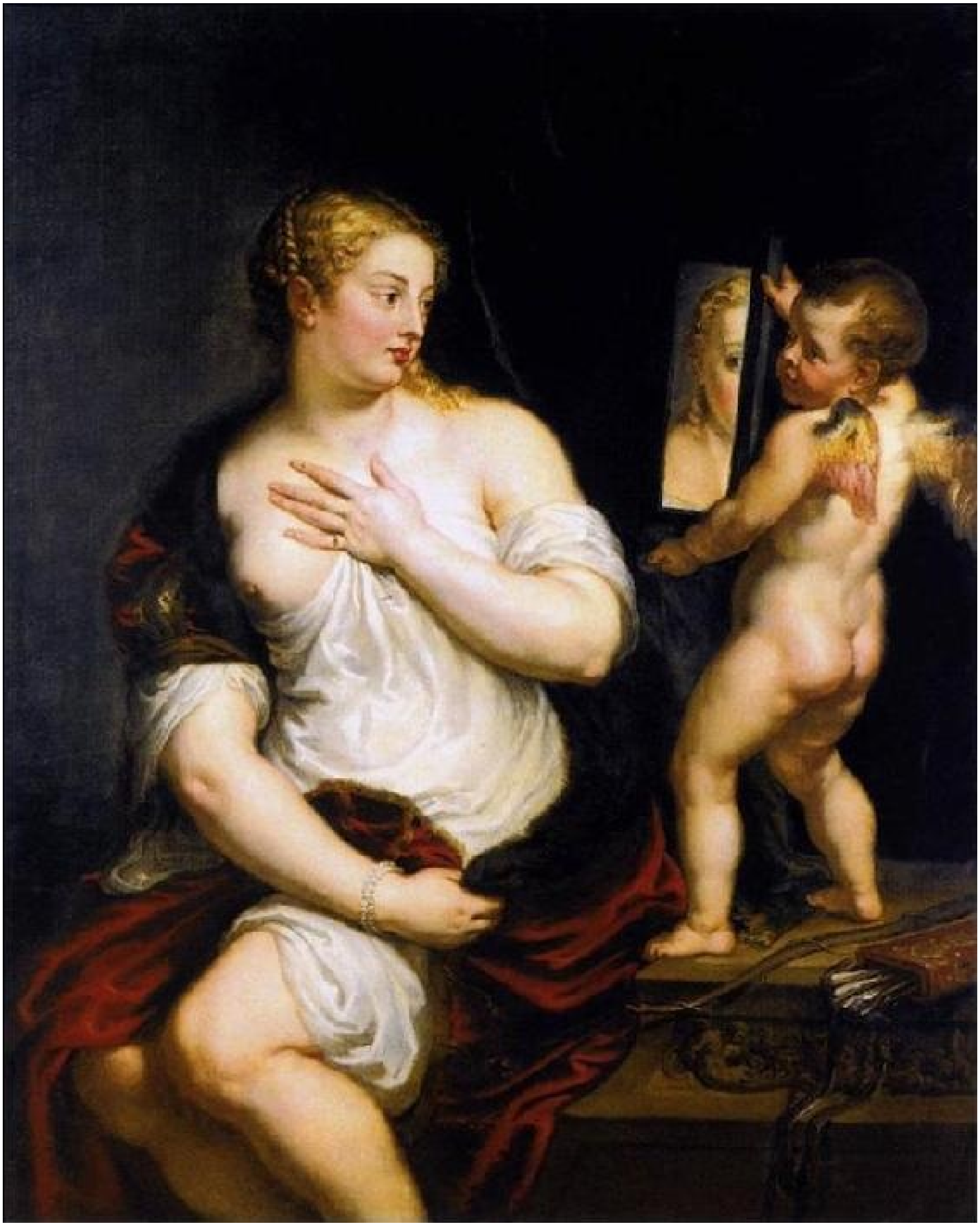
The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian

c.1608
153 x 118 cm
Galleria Corsini, Rome, Italy



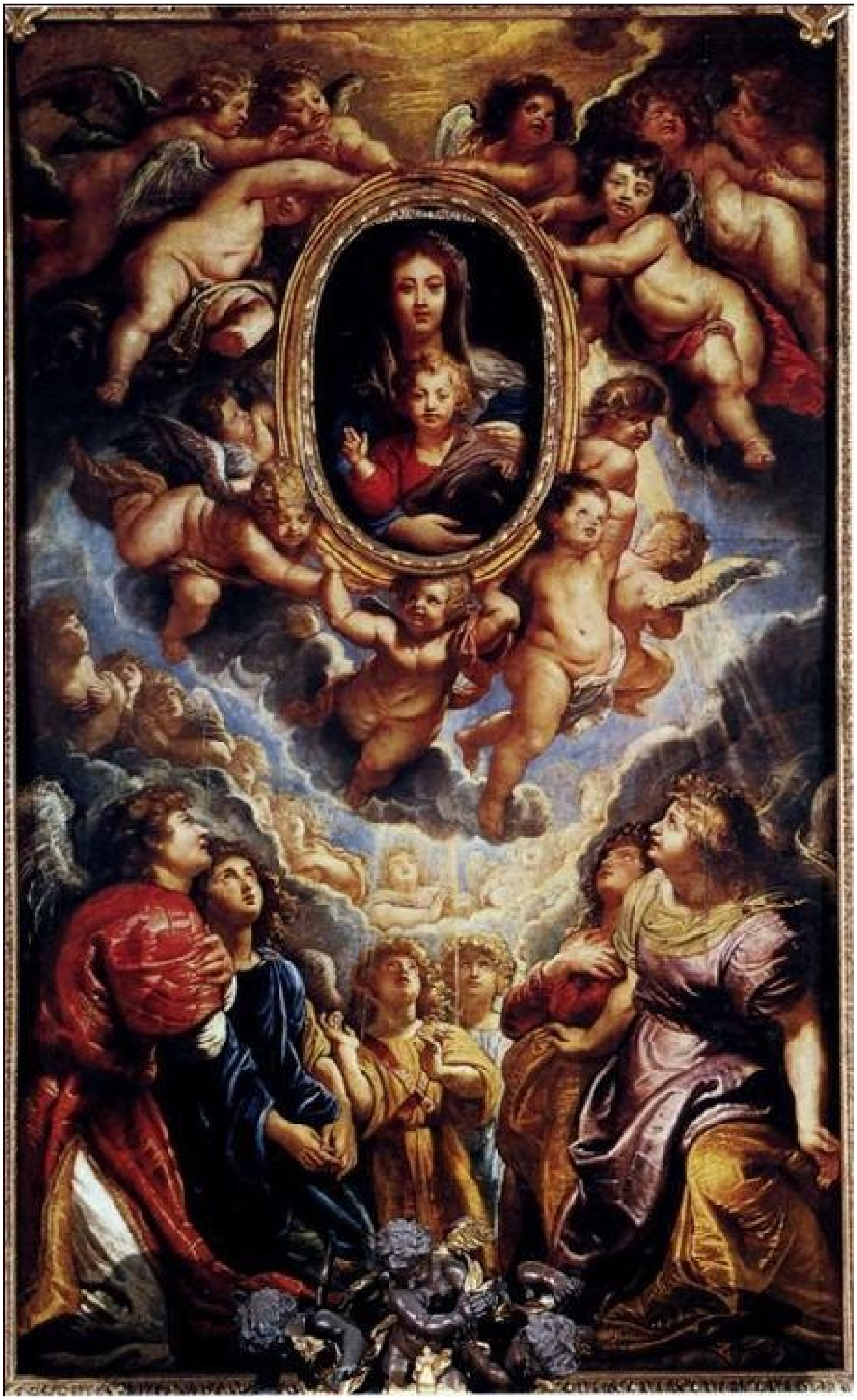
Venus at her Toilet

1608
137 x 110 cm
Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Paseo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



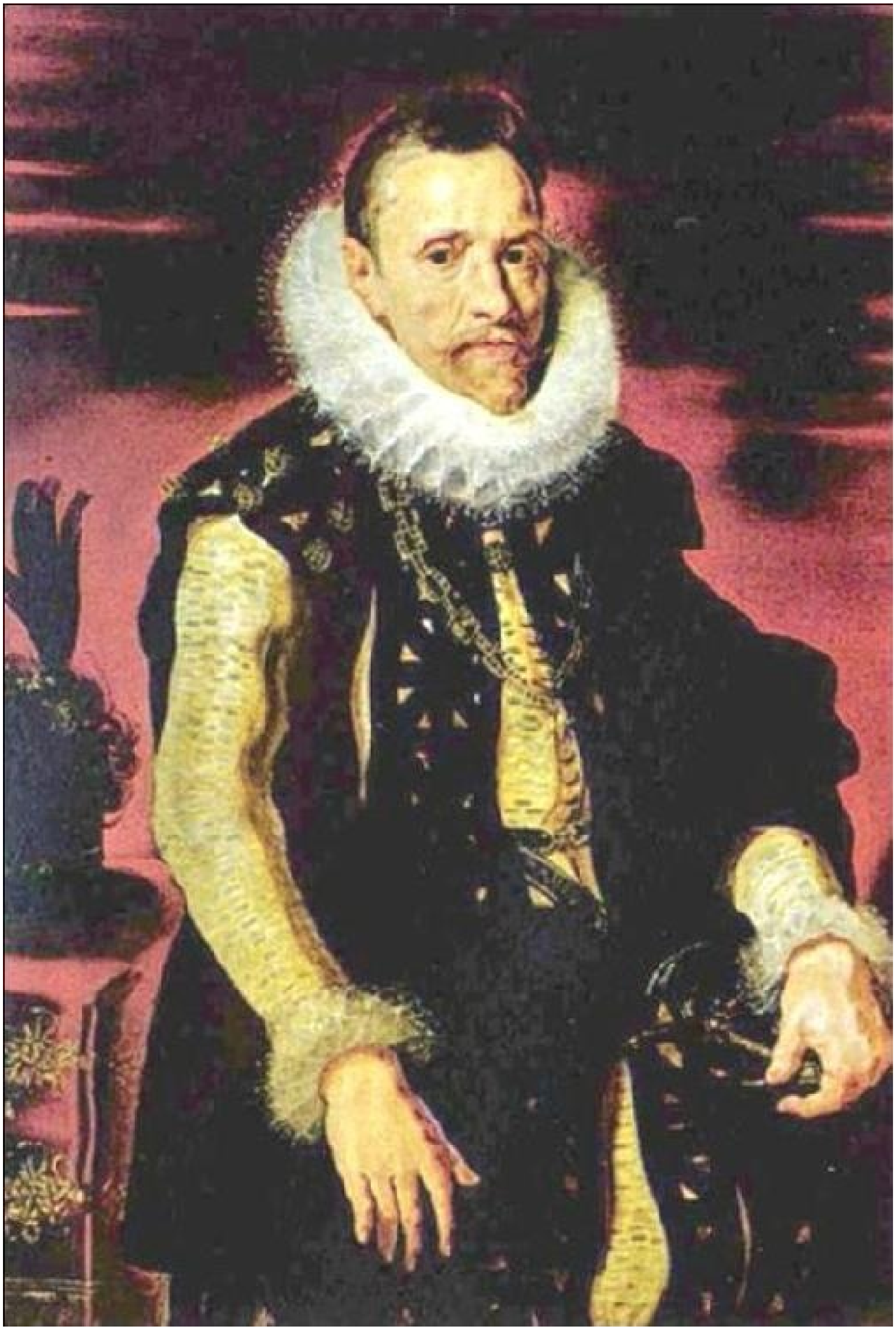
Virgin and Child Adored By Angels

1608
425 x 250 cm
Private Collection



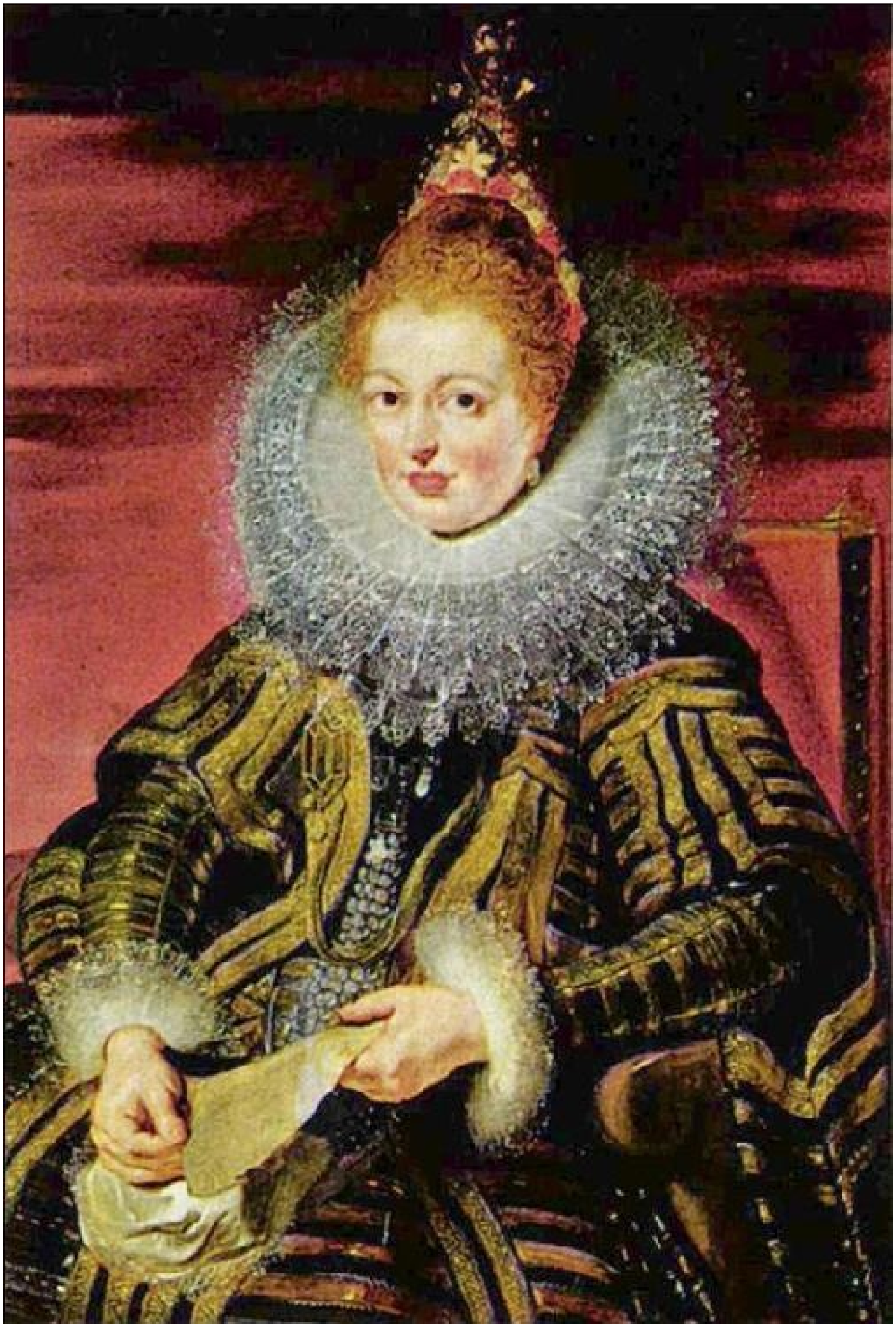
Albert VII, Governor of the Southern Provinces

c.1609
105 x 74 cm



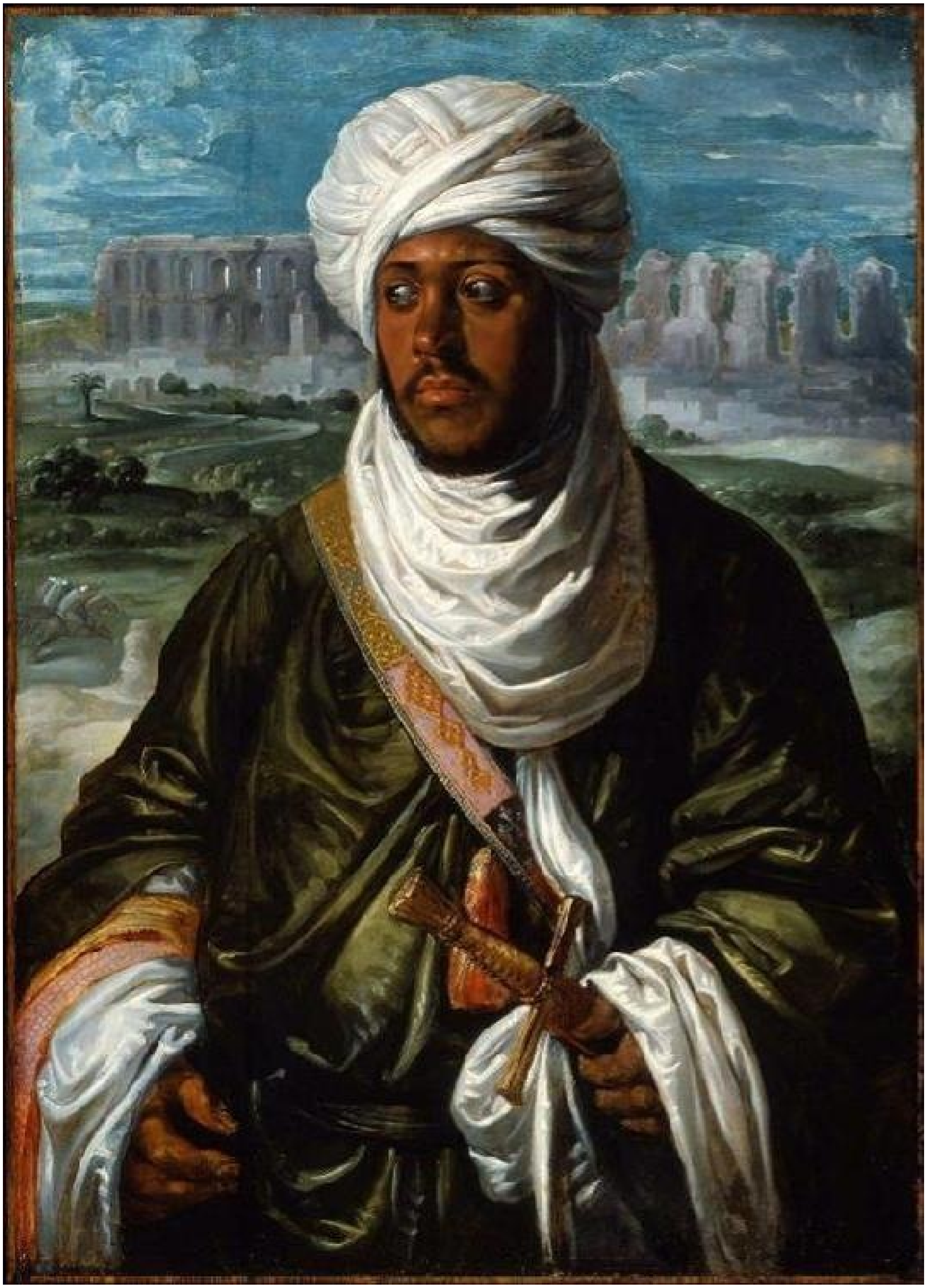
Isabella (1566-1633), Regent of the Low Countries

c.1609
105 x 74 cm



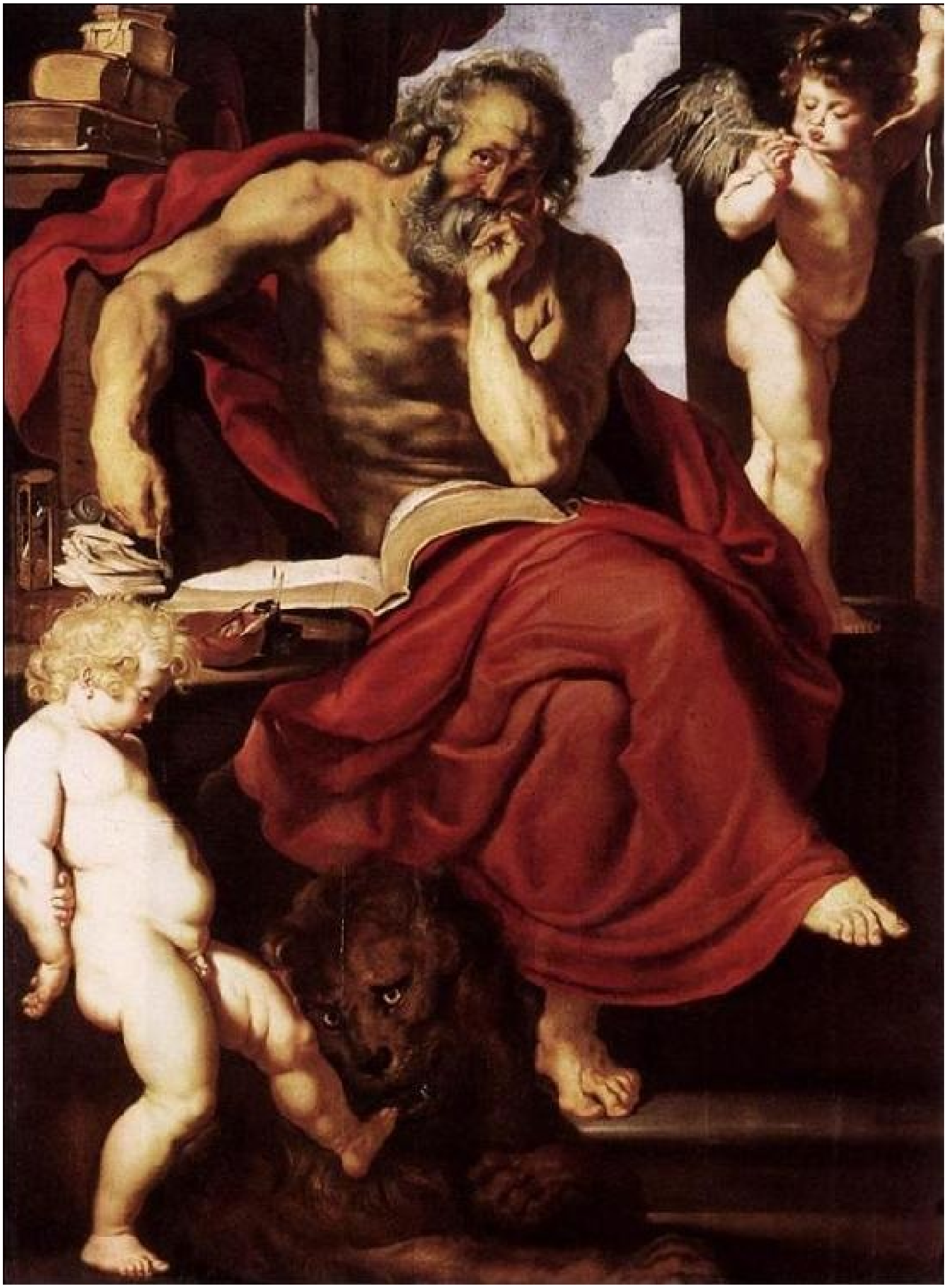
Mulay Ahmad

c.1609
100 x 72 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA



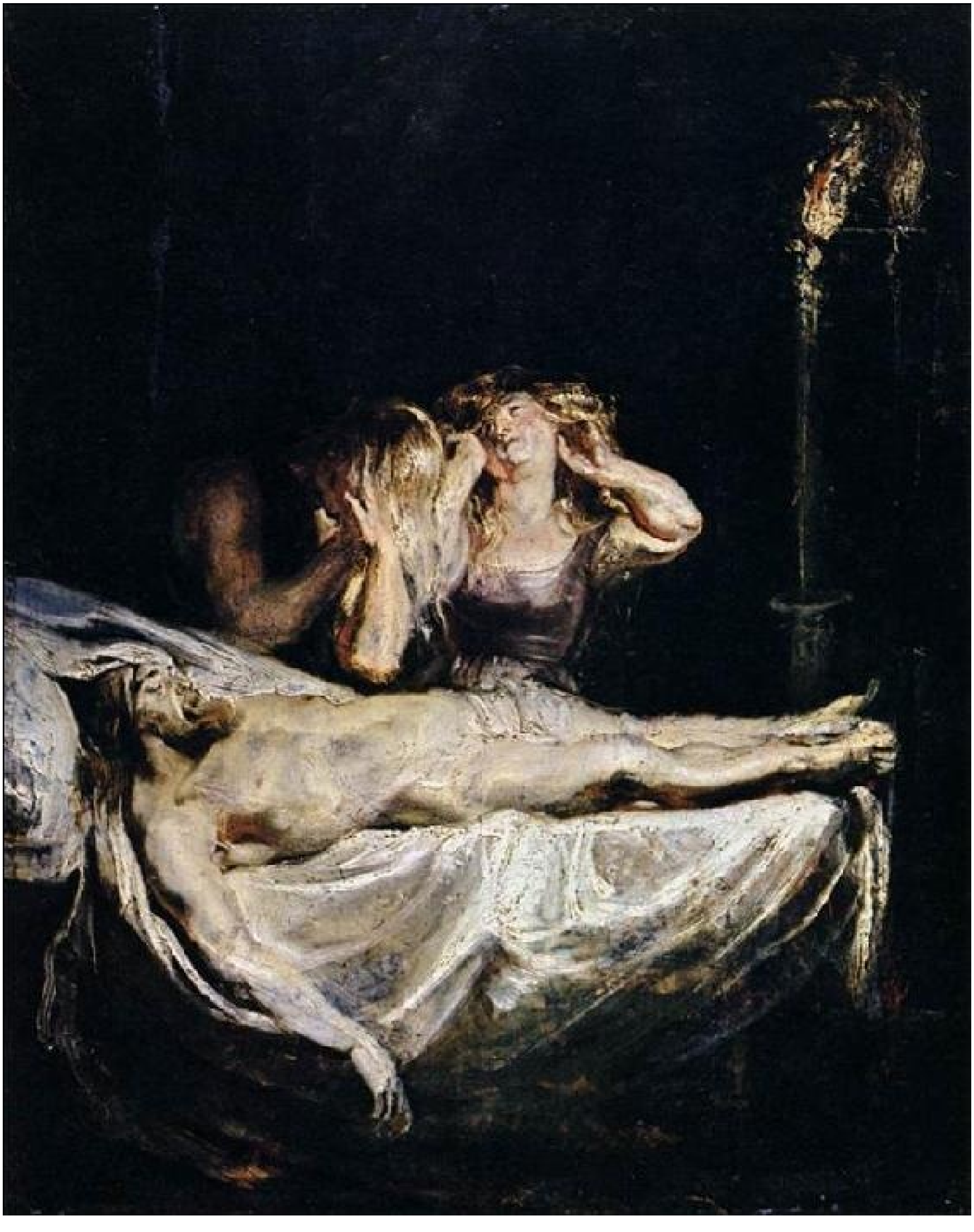
St. Jerome in His Hermitage

1609
186 x 136 cm

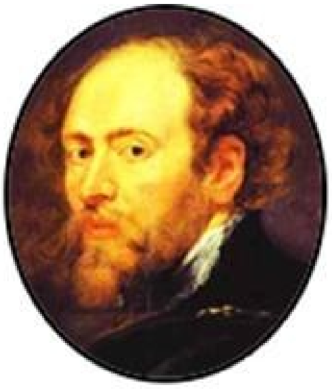


The Lamentation

c.1609
34 x 27 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany

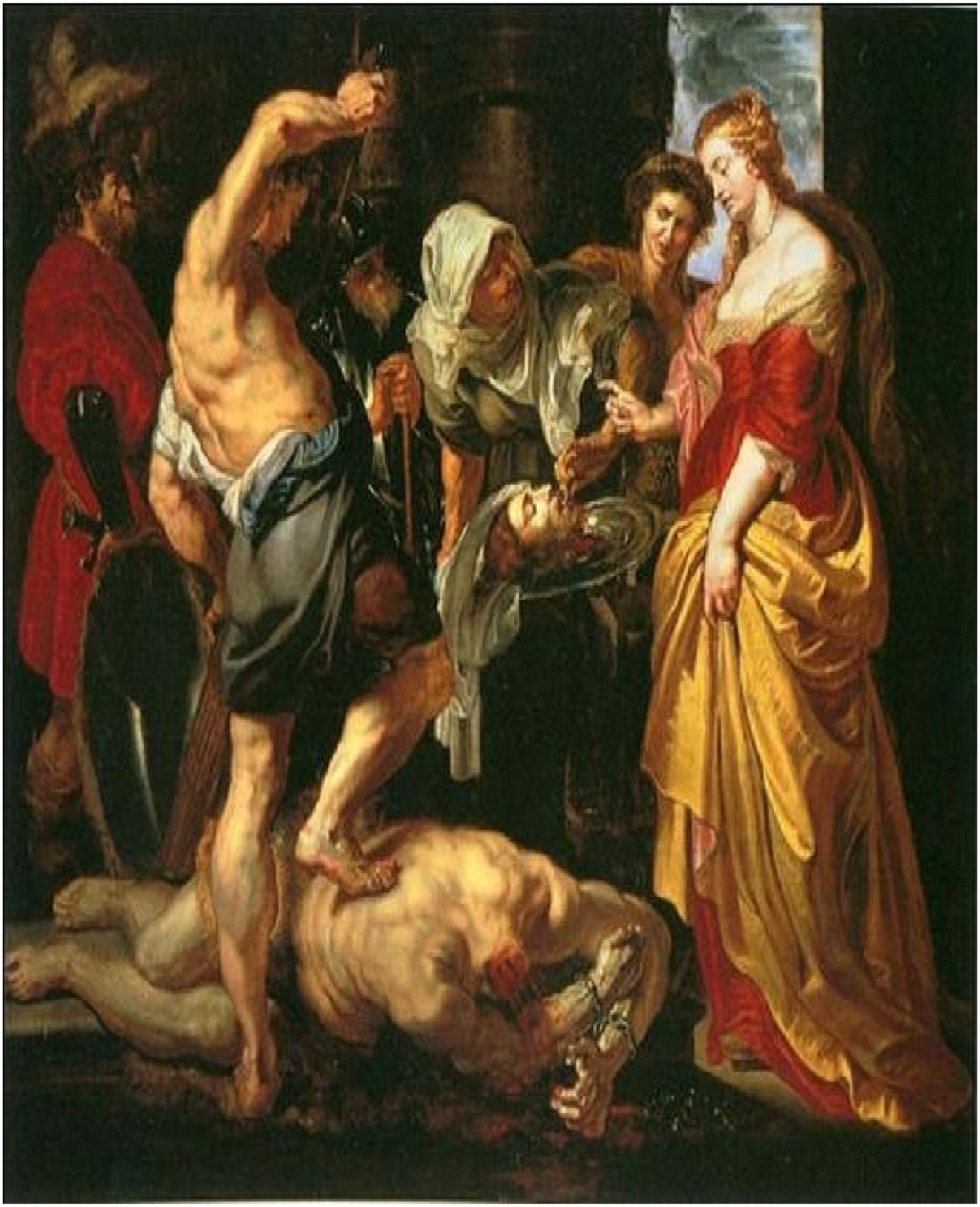


1610’s



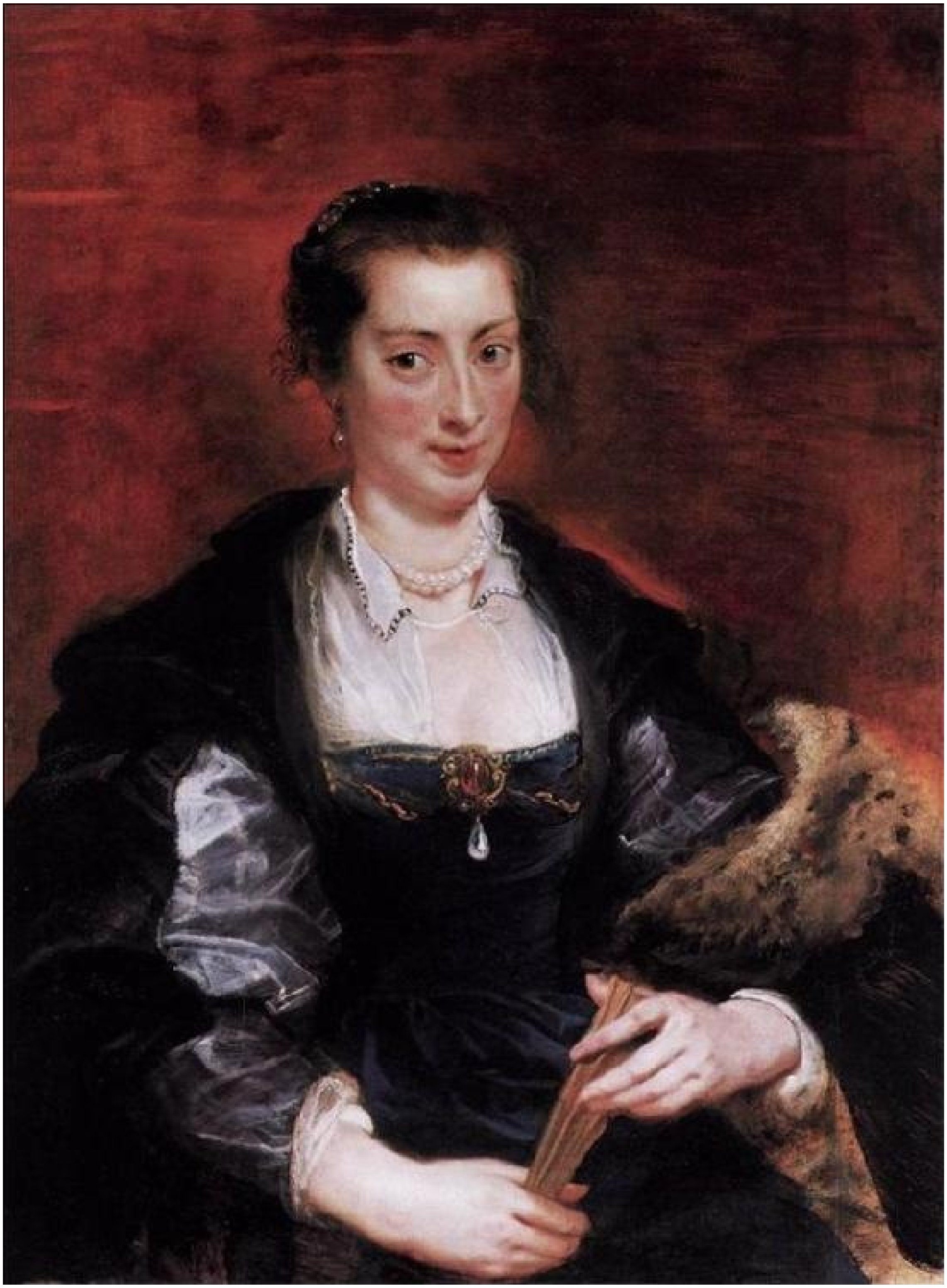
Beheading of St. John the Baptist

1610
Private Collection



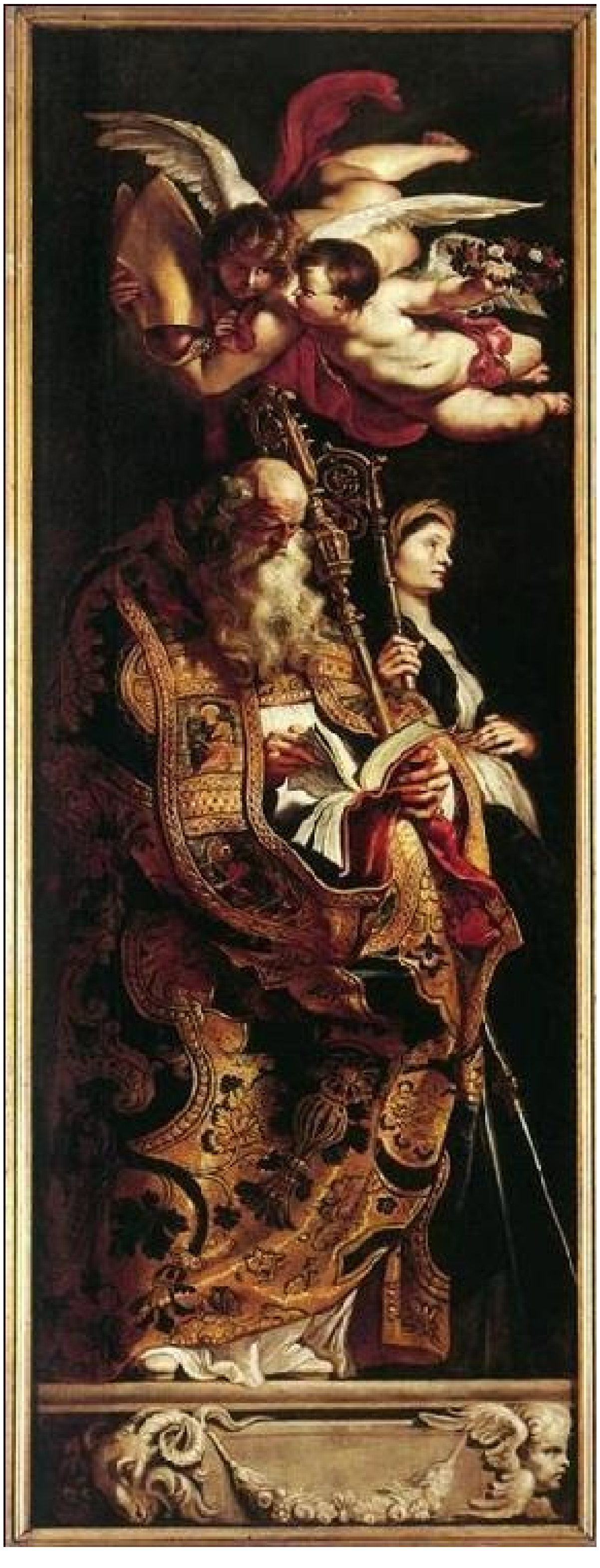
Isabella Brandt, First Wife

1610
96 x 70 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany



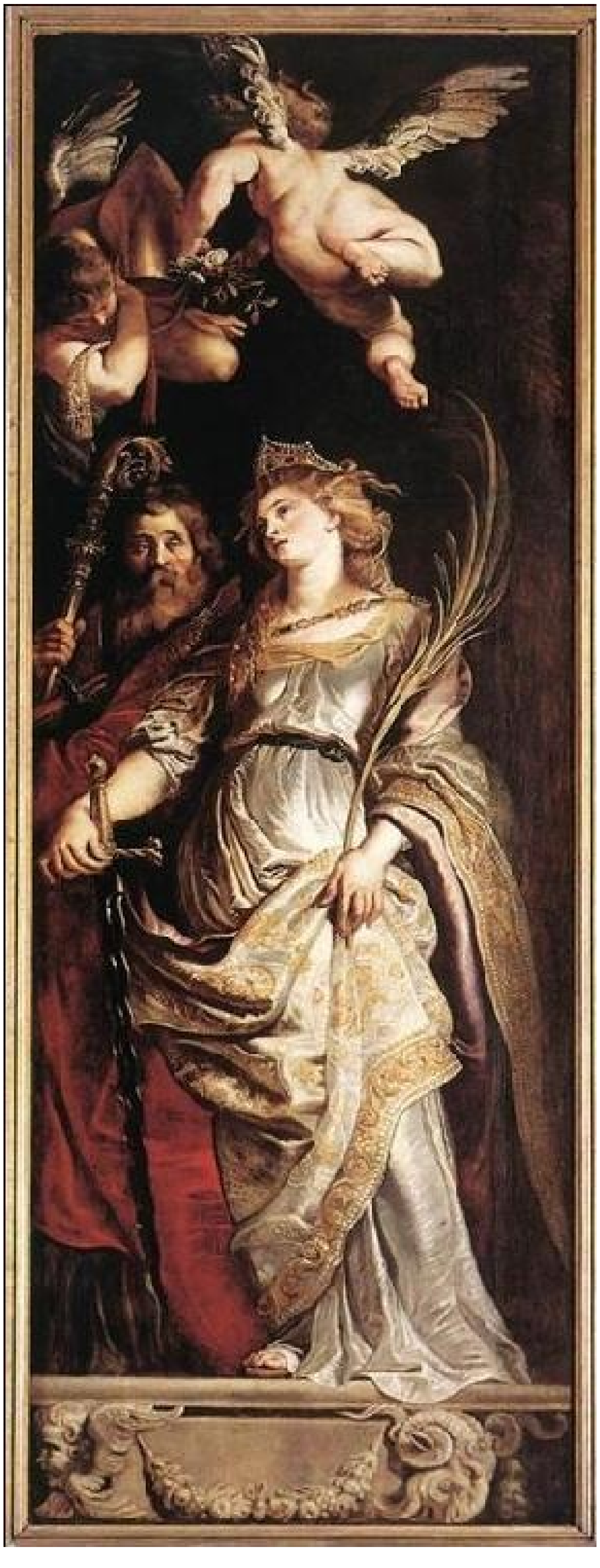
Raising of the Cross - Sts Amand and Walpurgis

1610
460 x 150 cm



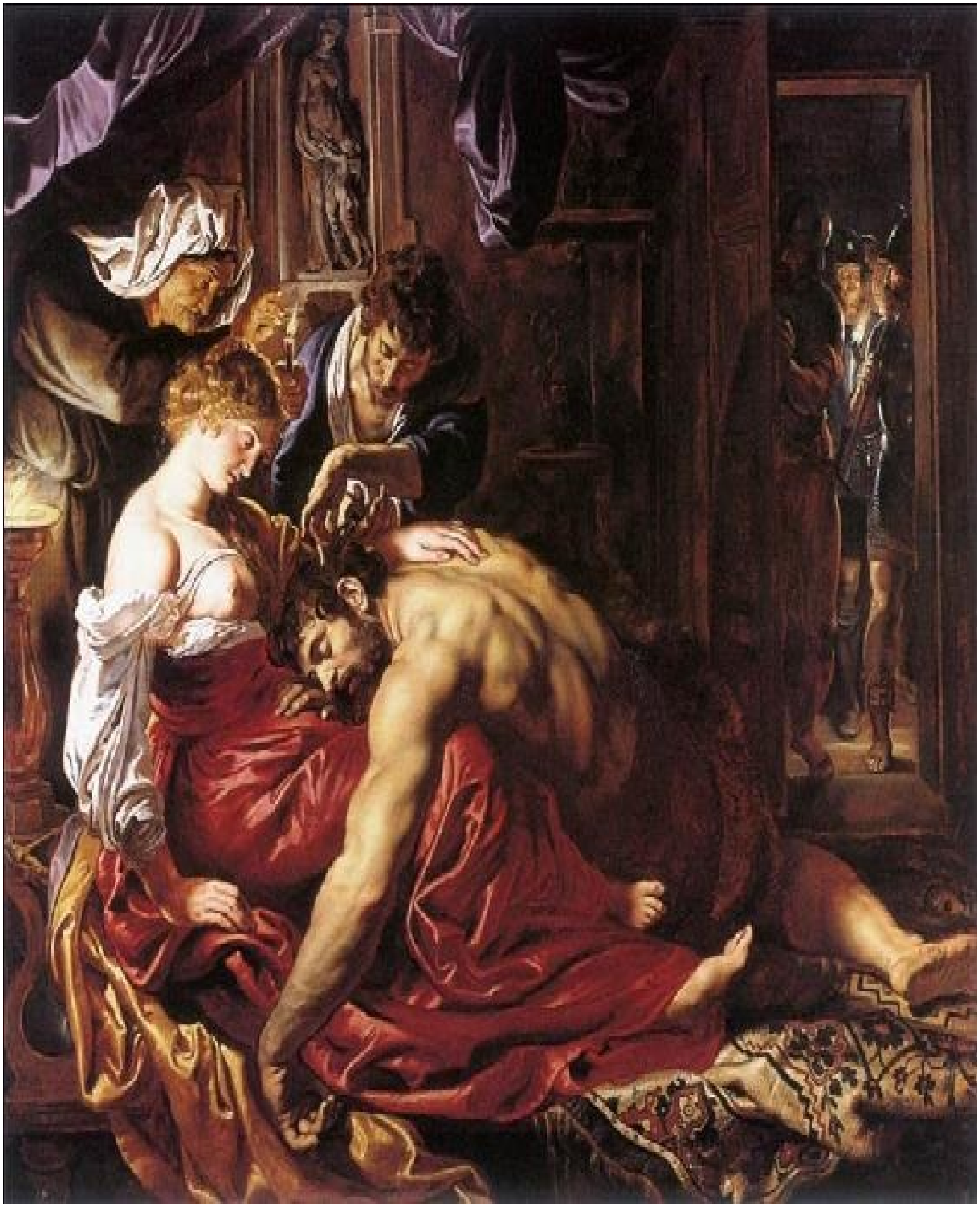
Raising of the Cross - Sts Eligius and Catherine

1610
460 x 150 cm



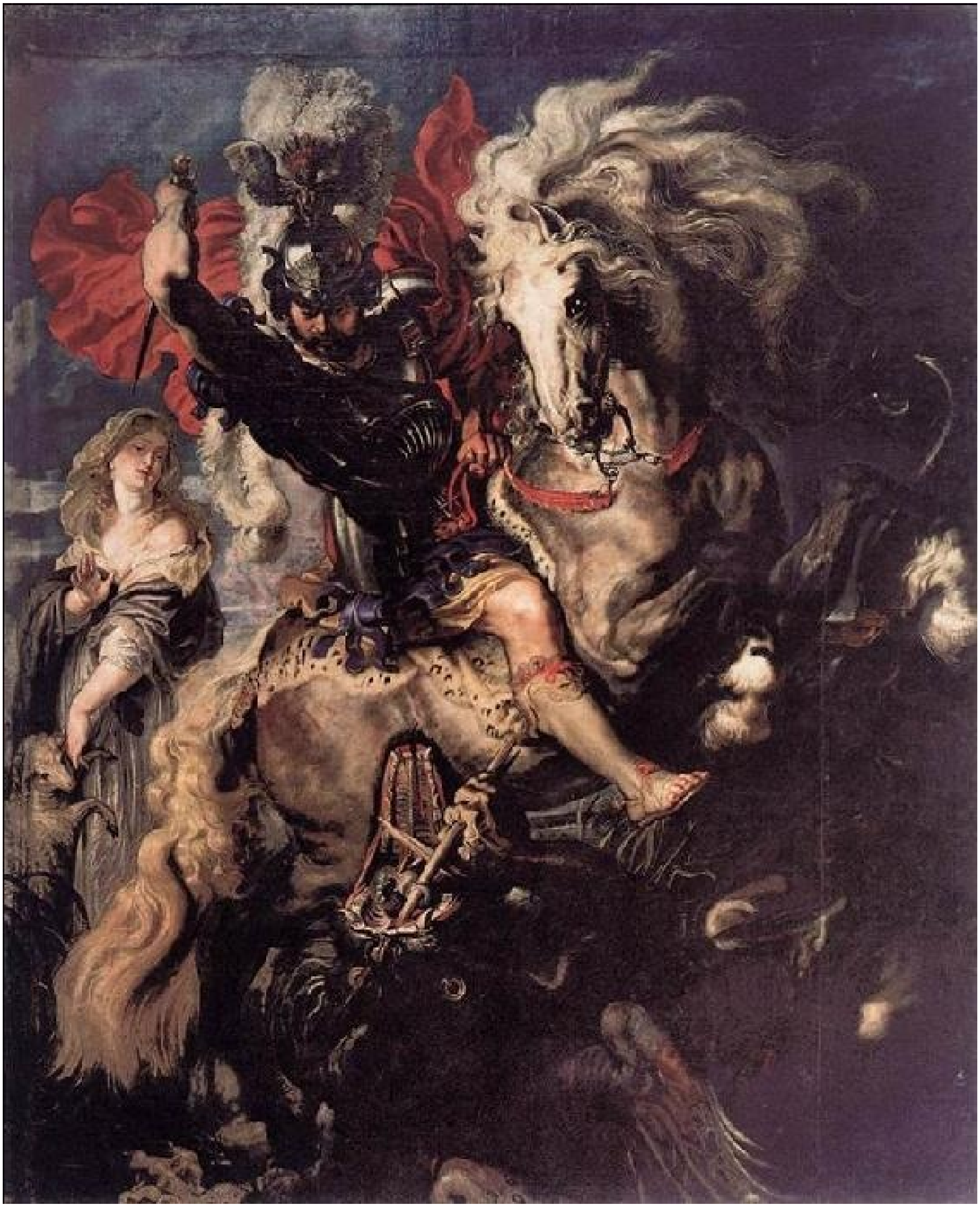
Samson and Delilah

c.1610
185 x 205 cm
Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH, USA



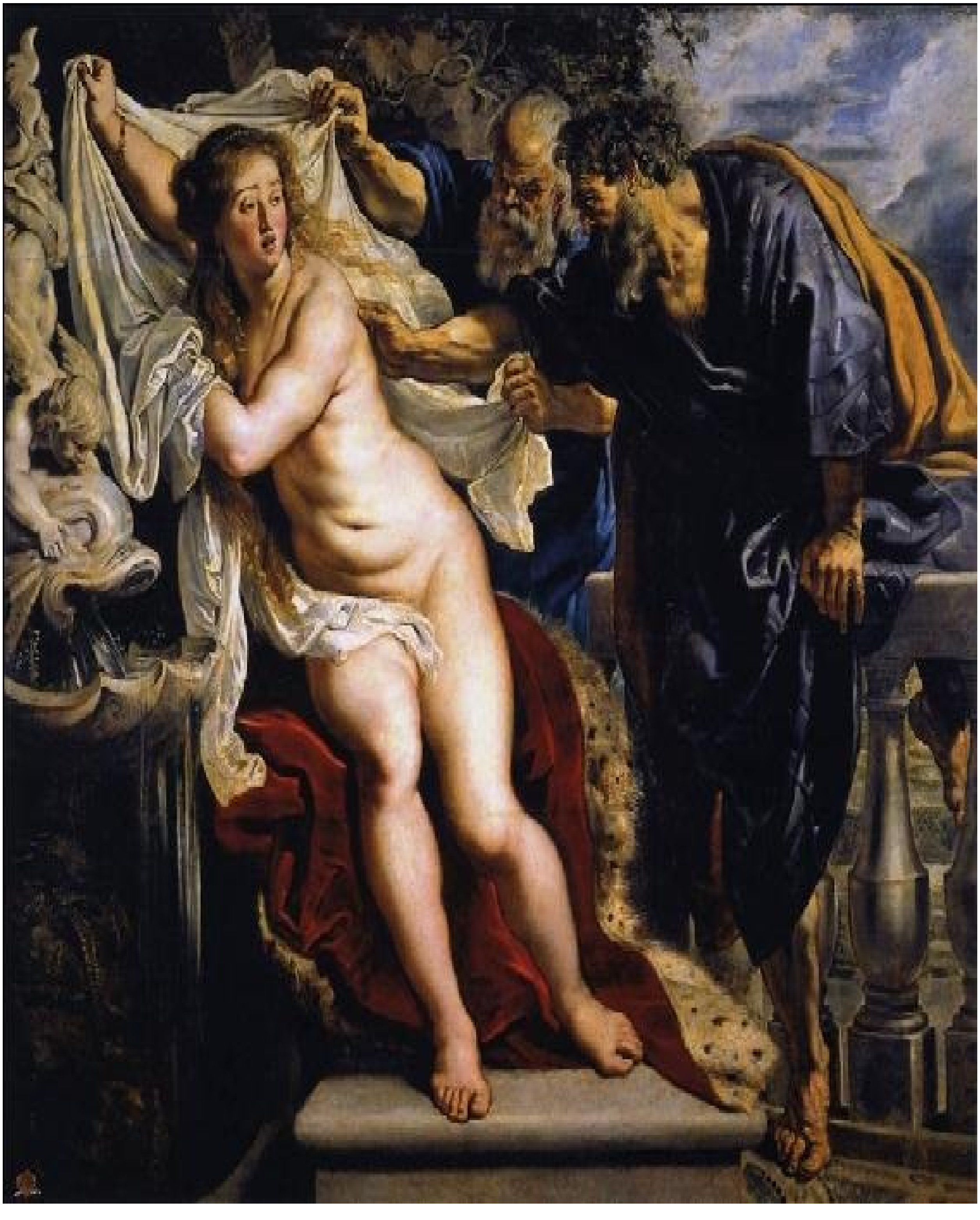
St. George and a Dragon

c.1610
305 x 256 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



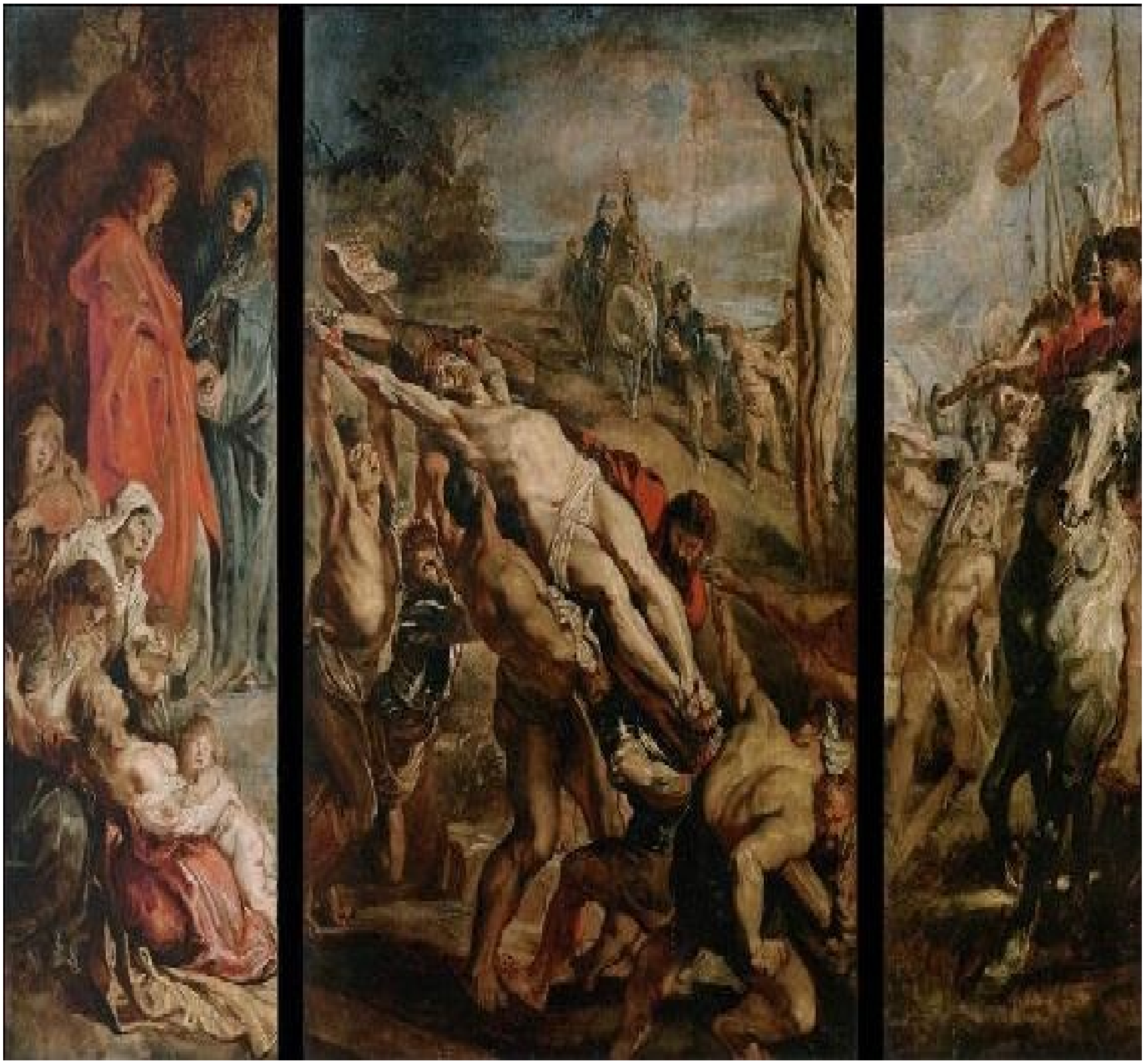
Susanna and the Elders

1610
198 x 218 cm
Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes San Fernando, Madrid, Spain



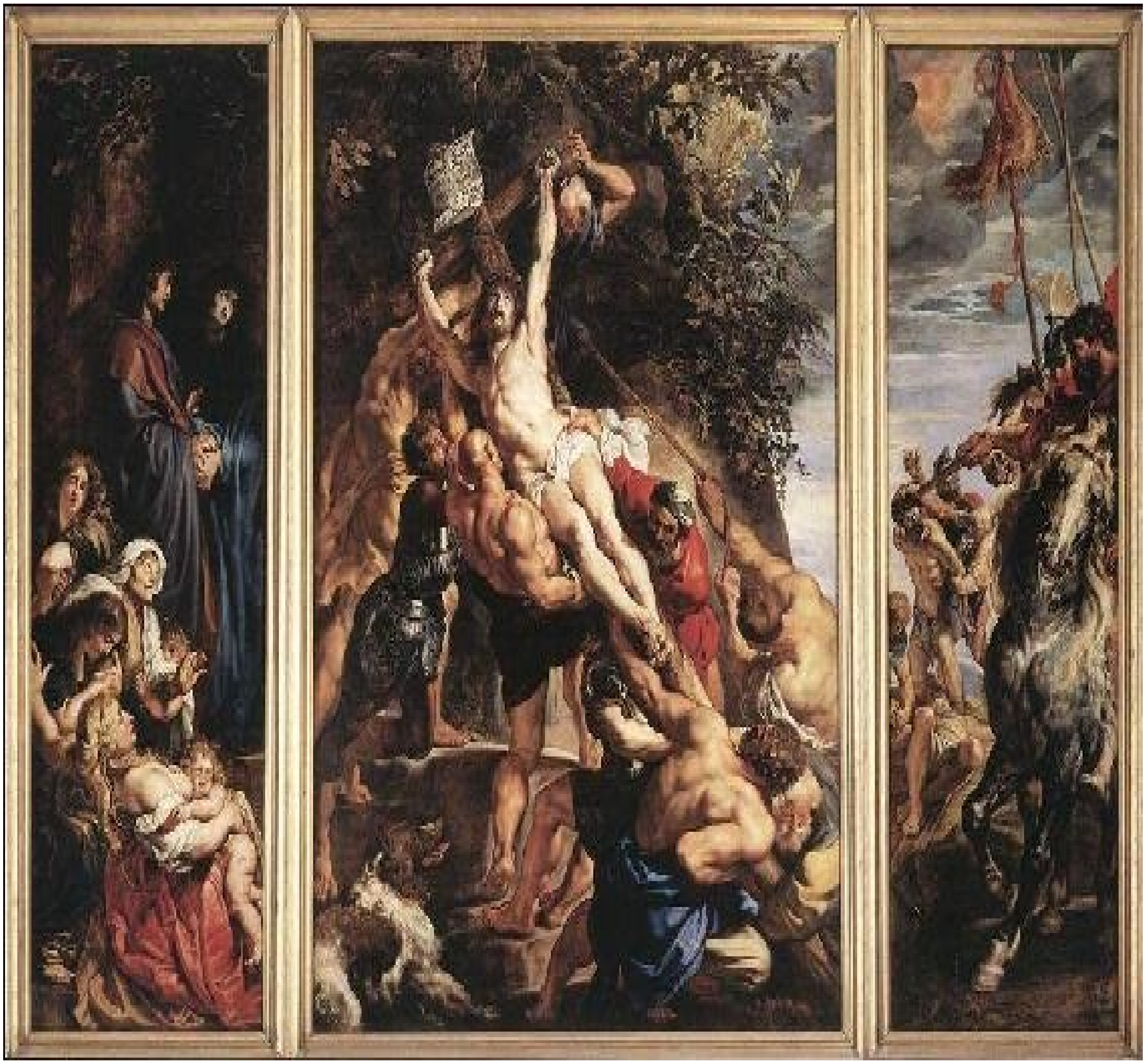
The Raising of the Cross

1610
68 x 107 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



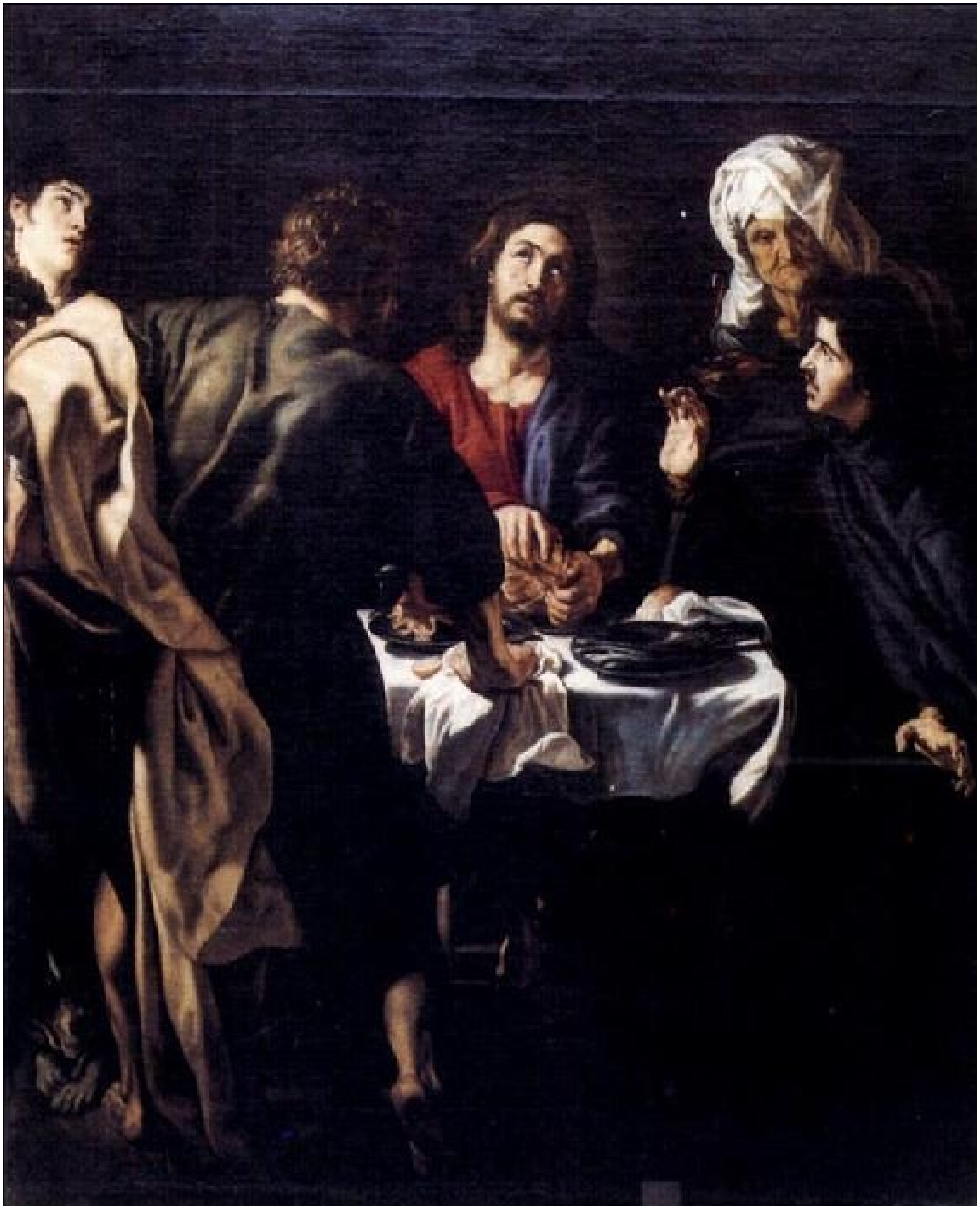
The Raising of the Cross

1610
Onze Lieve Vrouwkerk, Antwerp Cathedral, Belgium



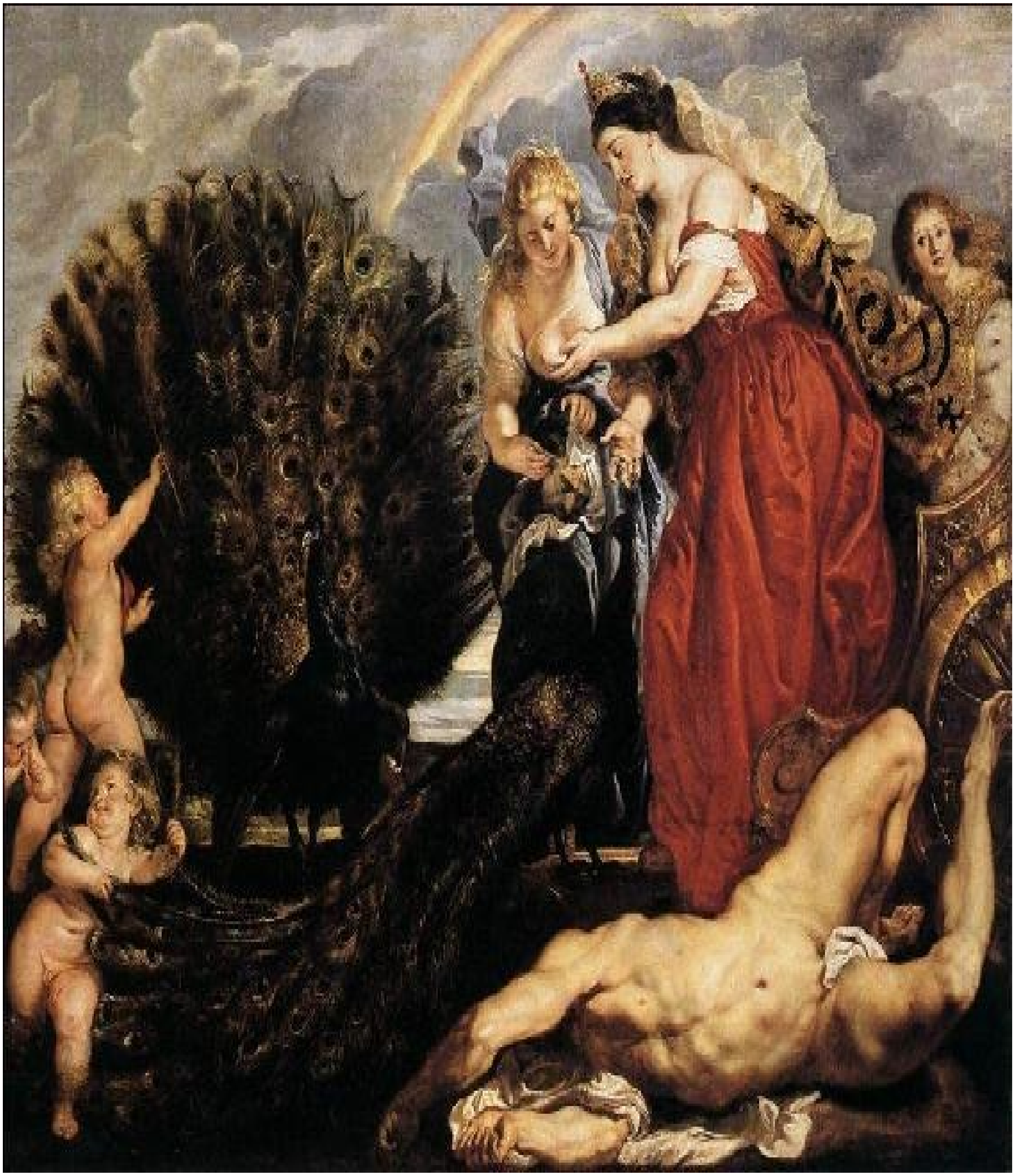
The Supper at Emmaus

1610
205 x 188 cm
Private Collection



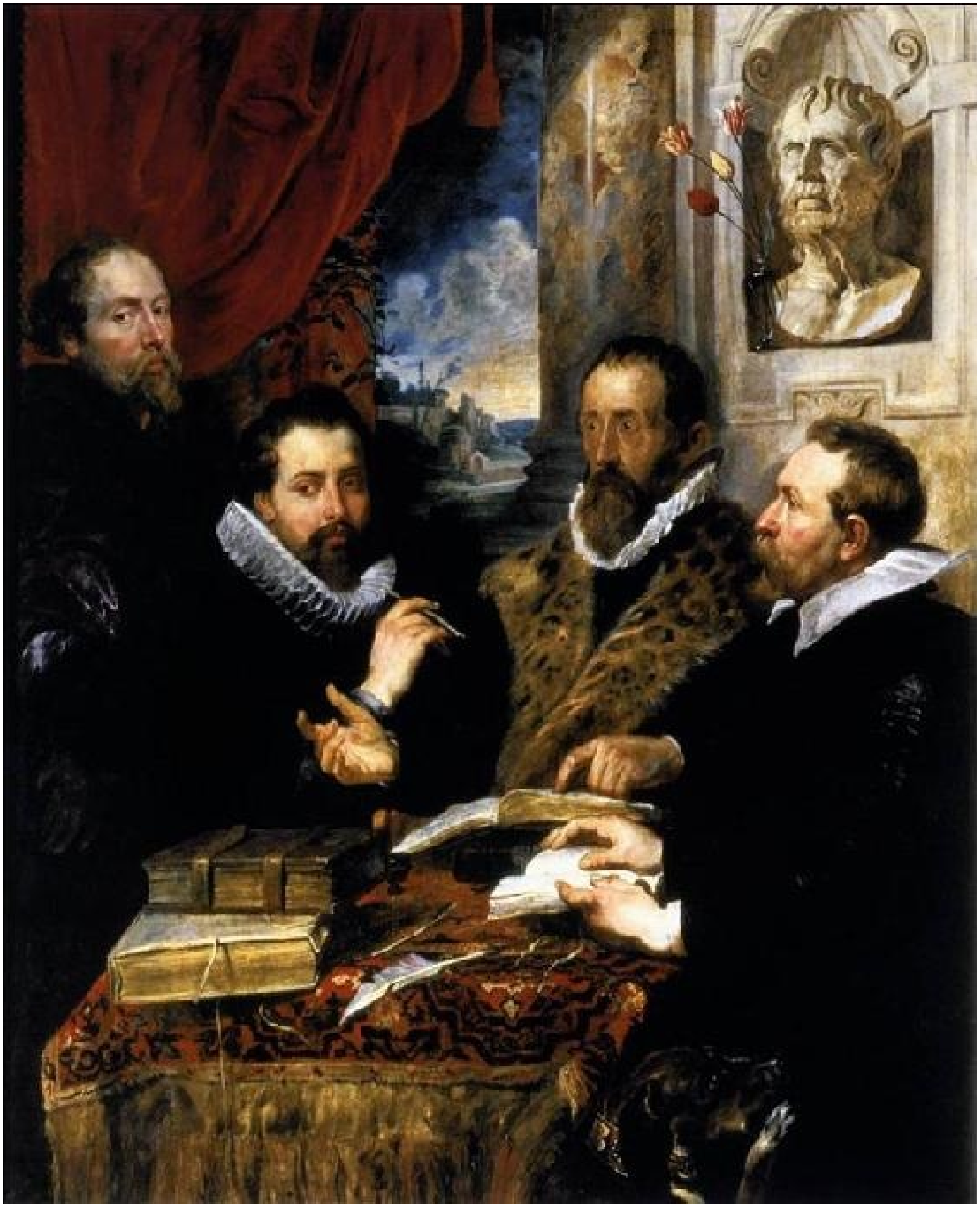
Juno and Argus

c.1611
249 x 296 cm
Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, Germany



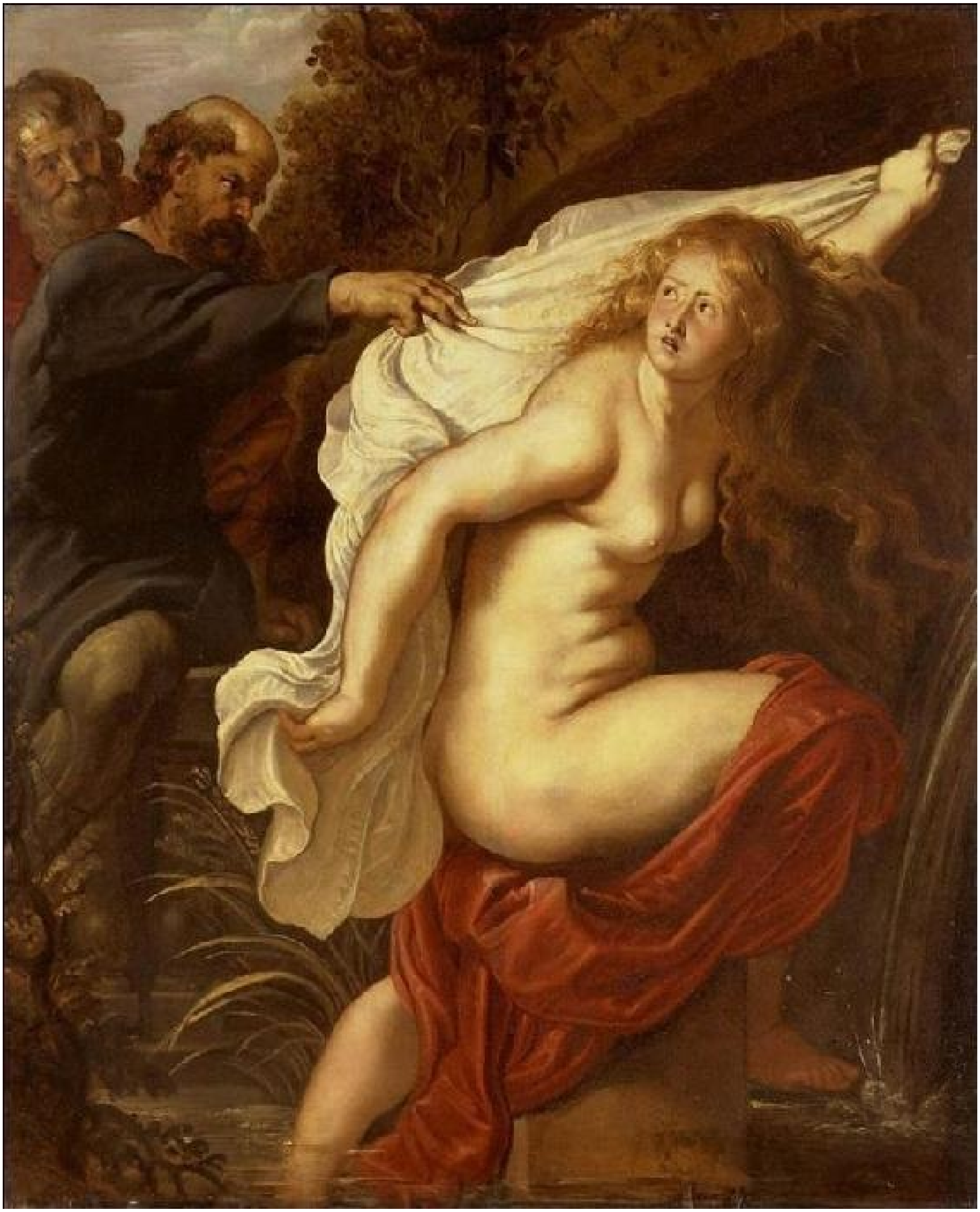
Selfportrait with brother Philipp, Justus Lipsius and another scholar

1611
249 x 296 cm
Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne



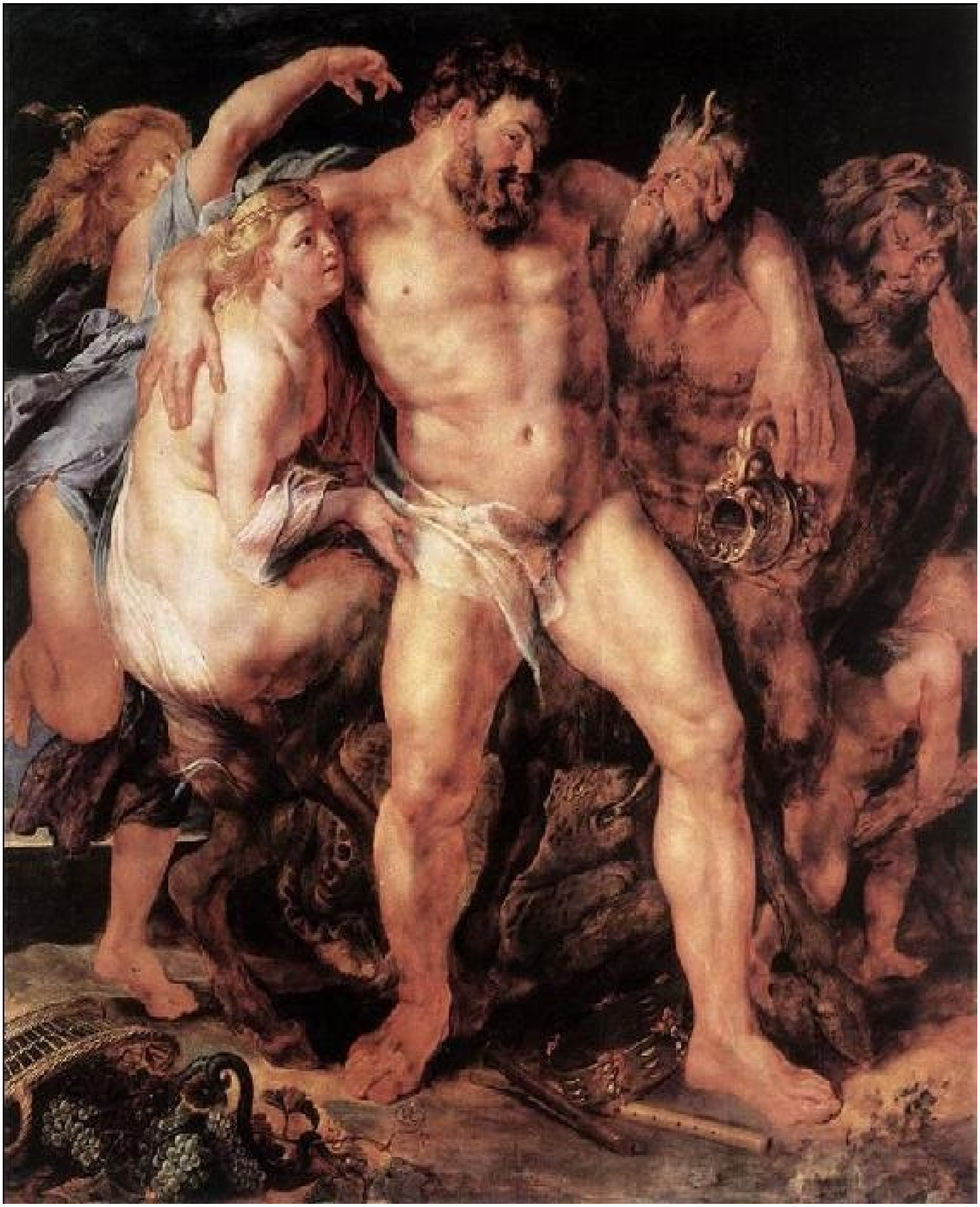
Susanna and the Elders

c.1611
123 x 108 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



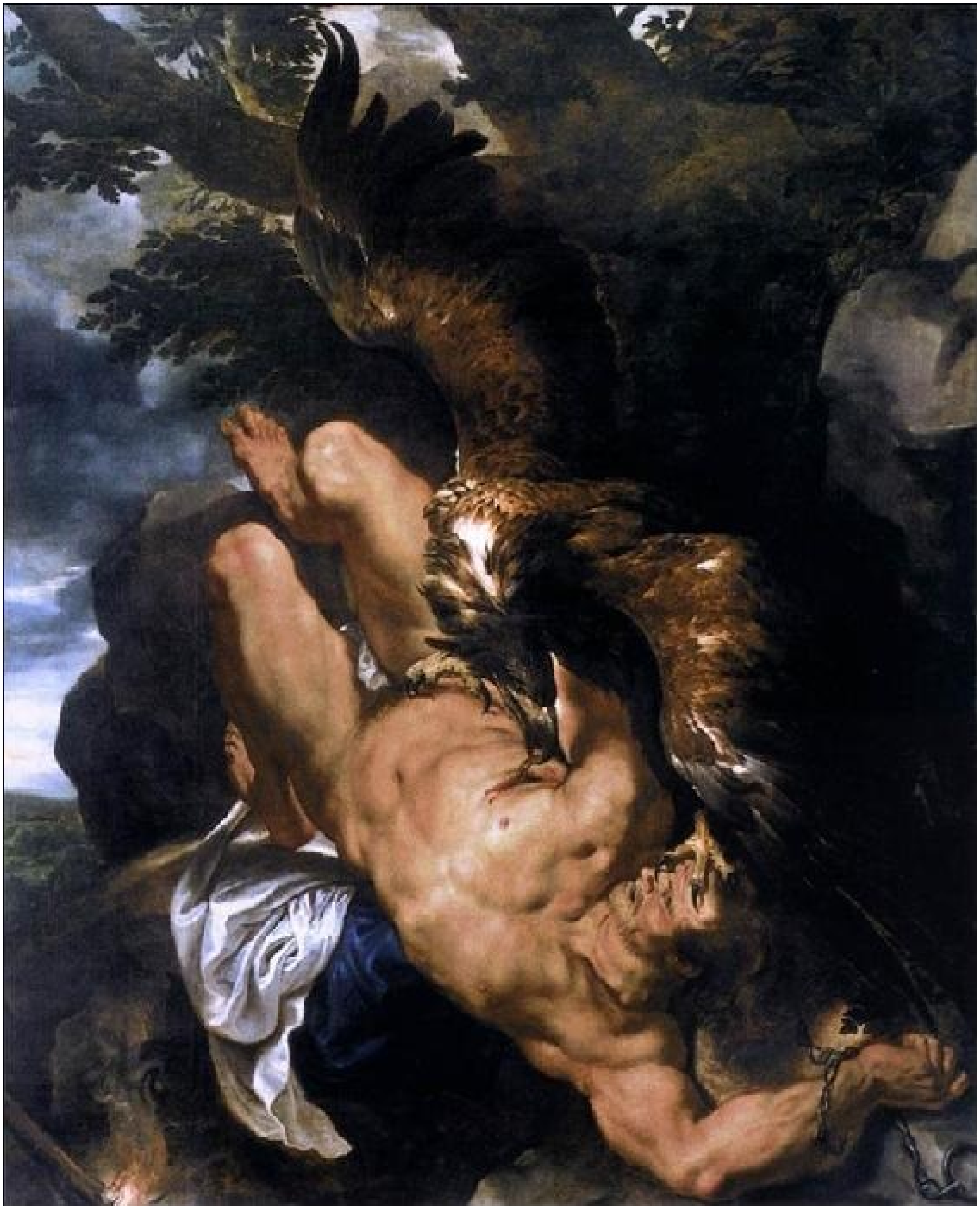
The Drunken Hercules

c.1611
220 x 220 cm



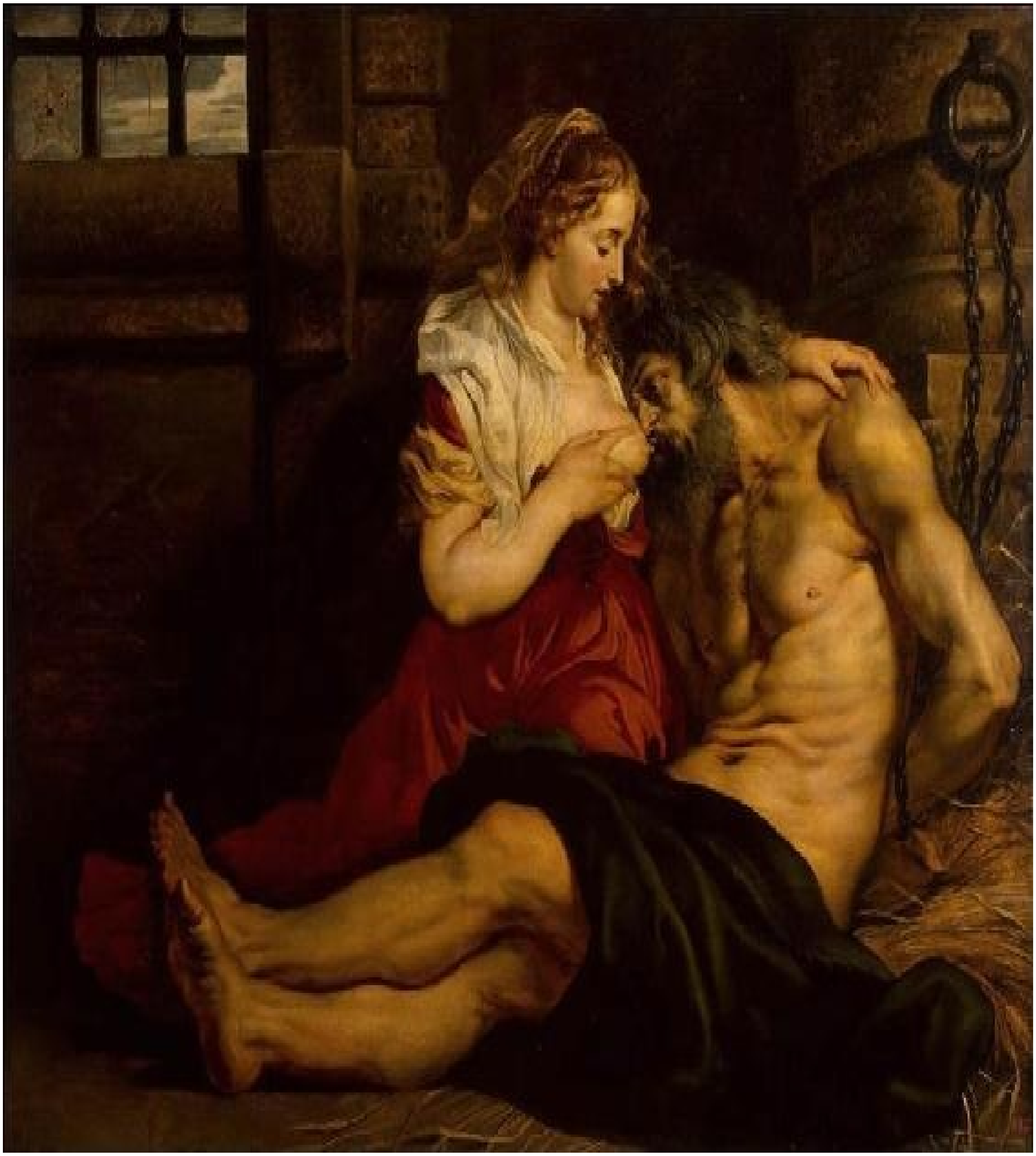
Prometheus Bound

c.1612
243 x 210 cm



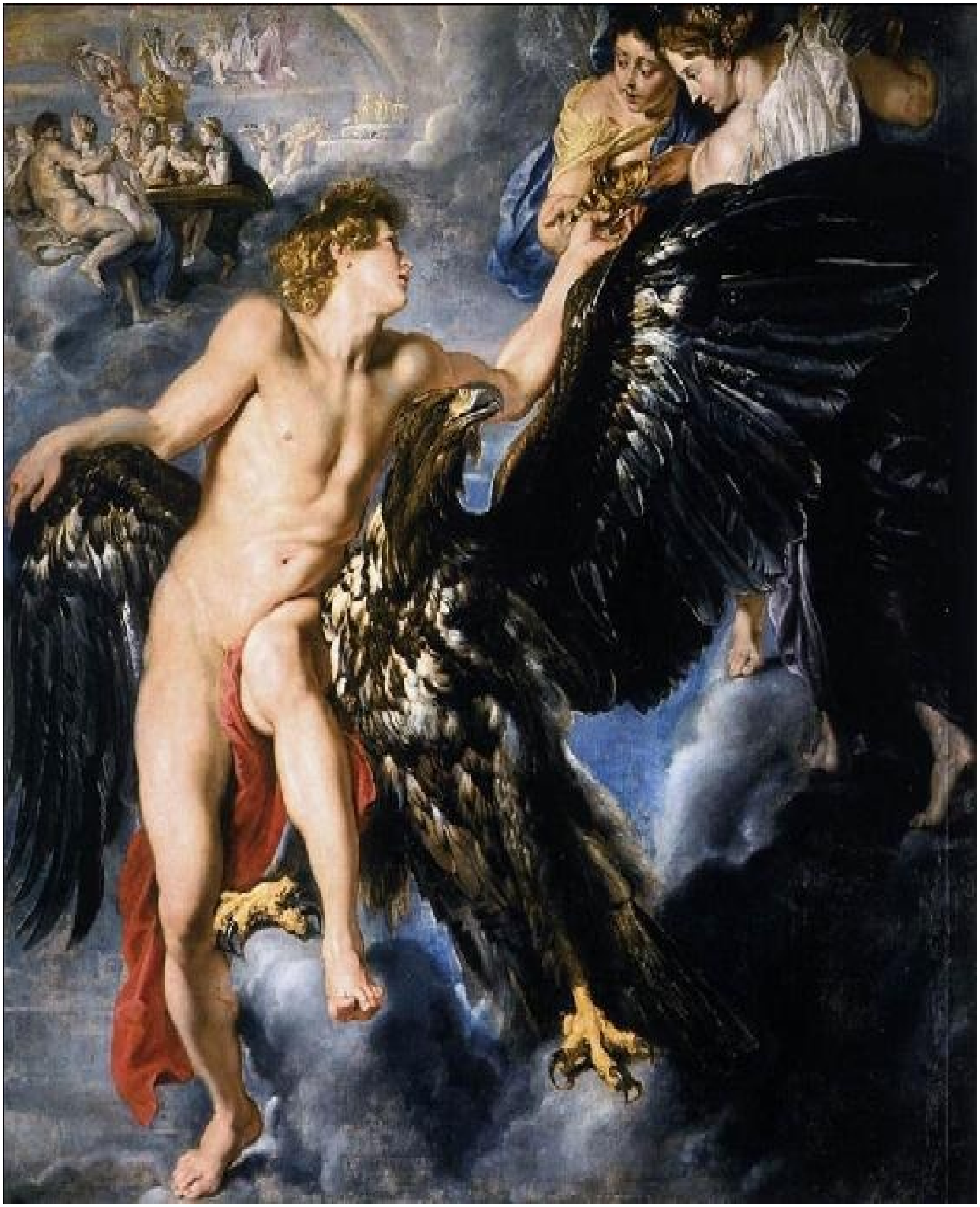
Roman Charity

1612
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



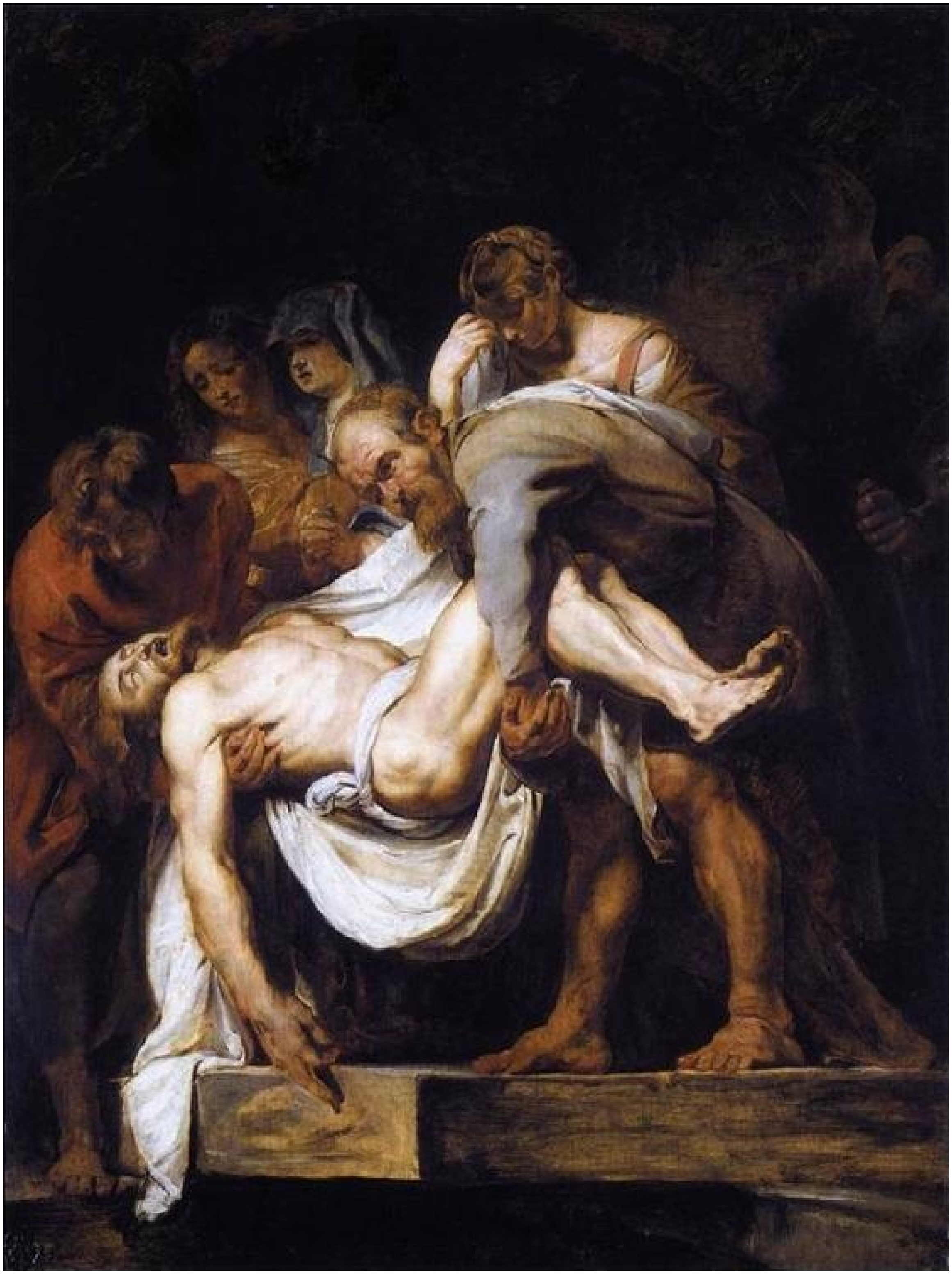
The Abduction of Ganymede

1612
203 x 203 cm



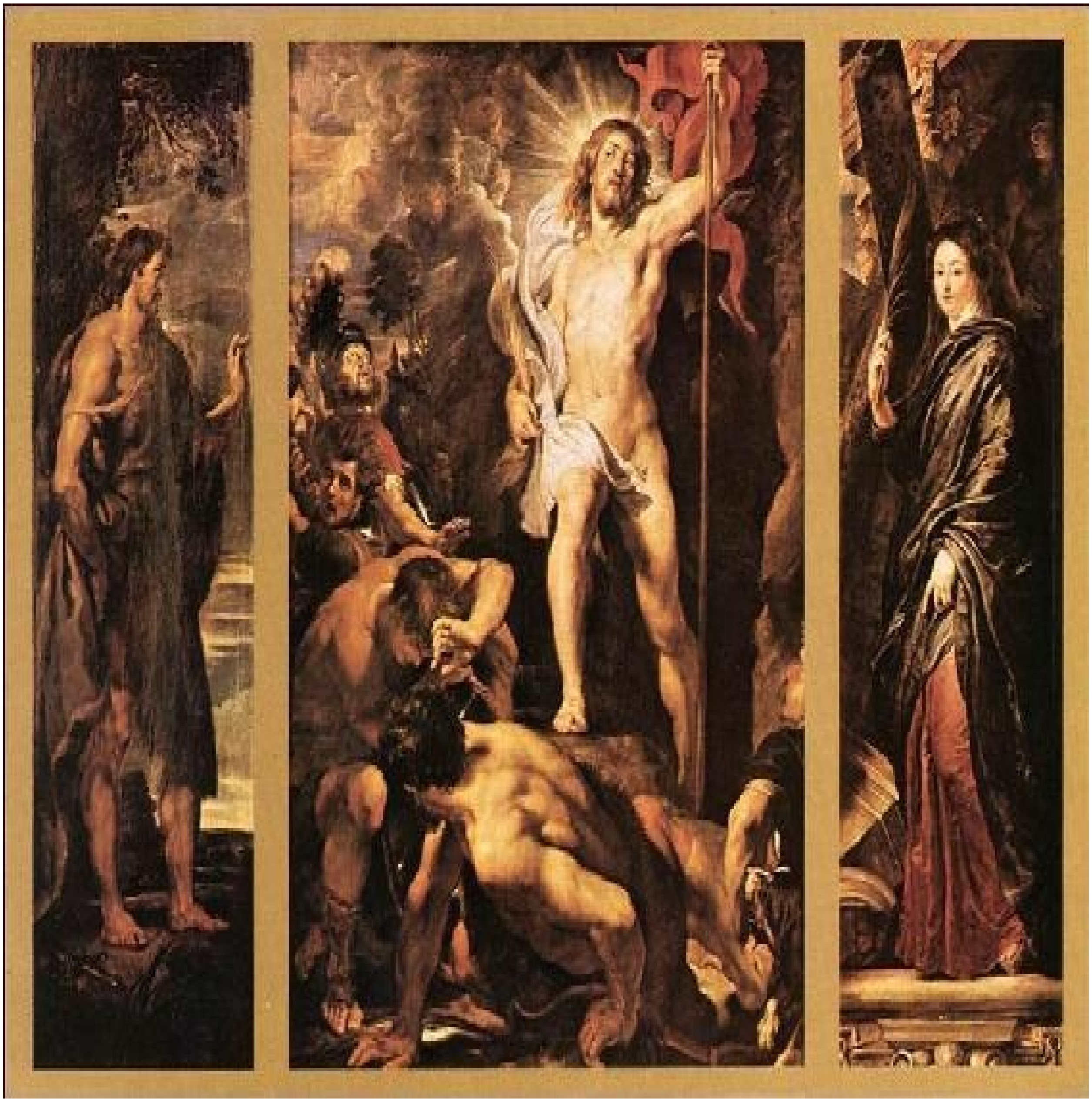
The Entombment

1612
88 x 66 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada



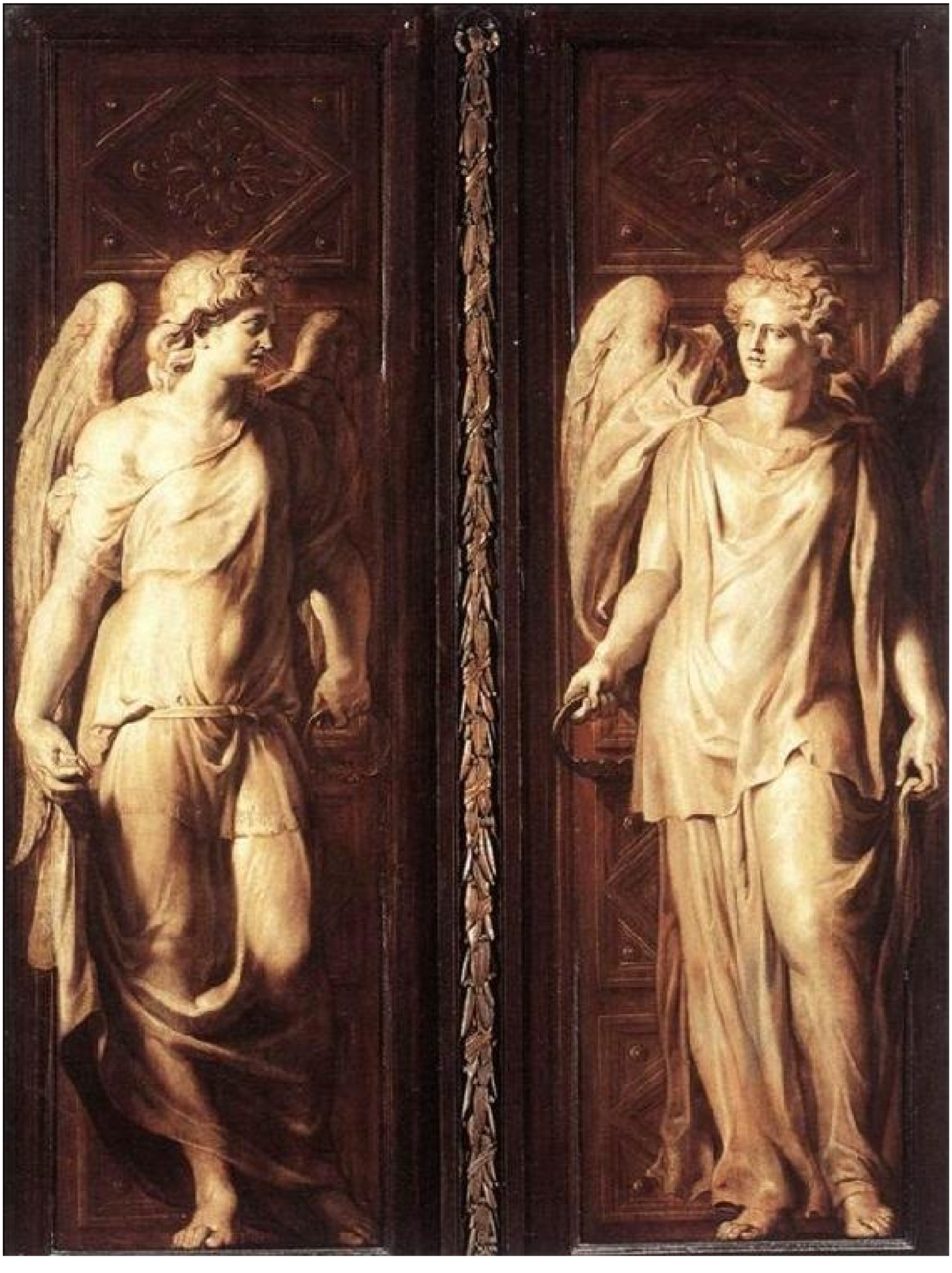
The Resurrection of Christ

1612
138 x 178 cm



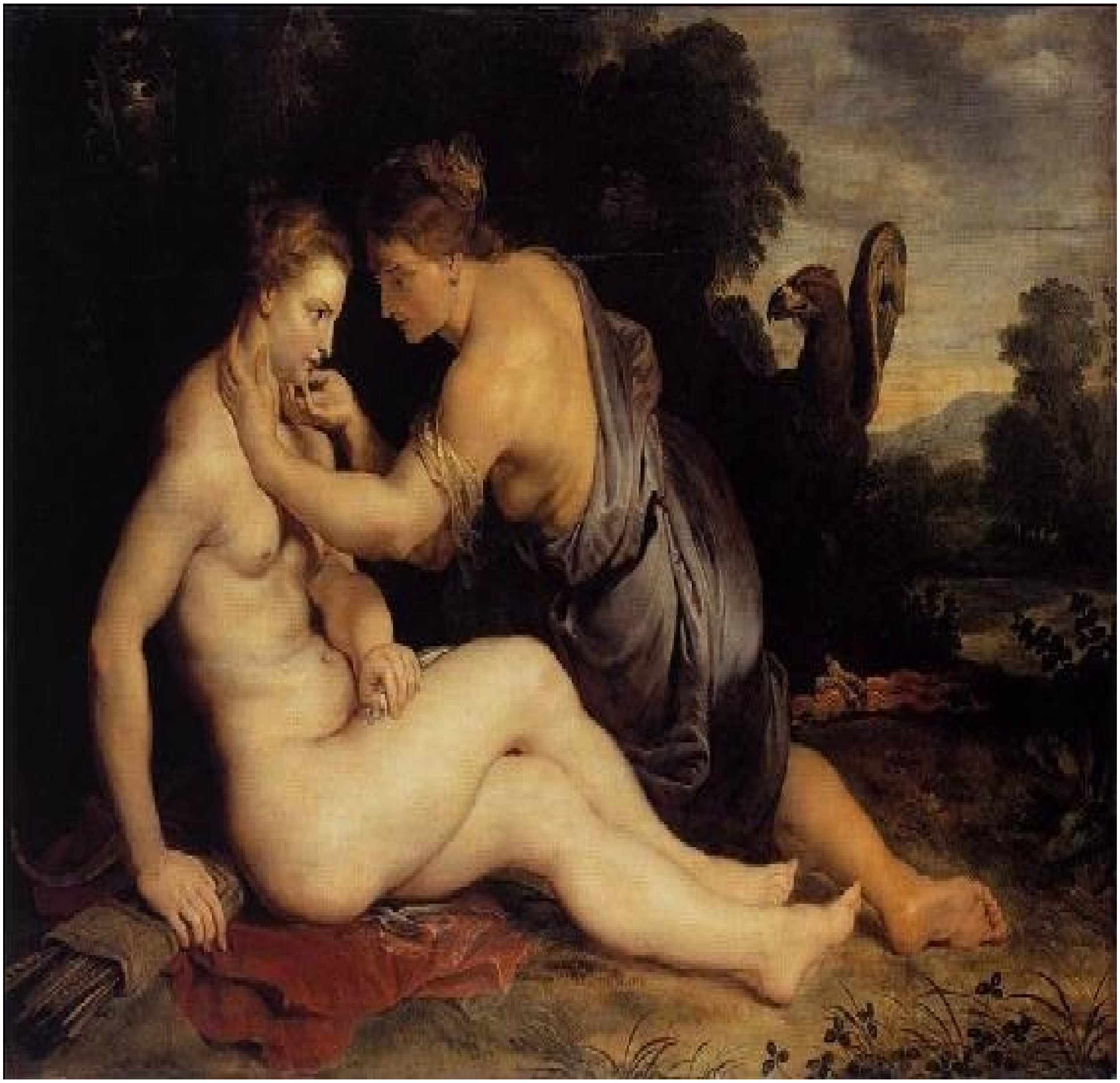
The Resurrection of Christ

1612



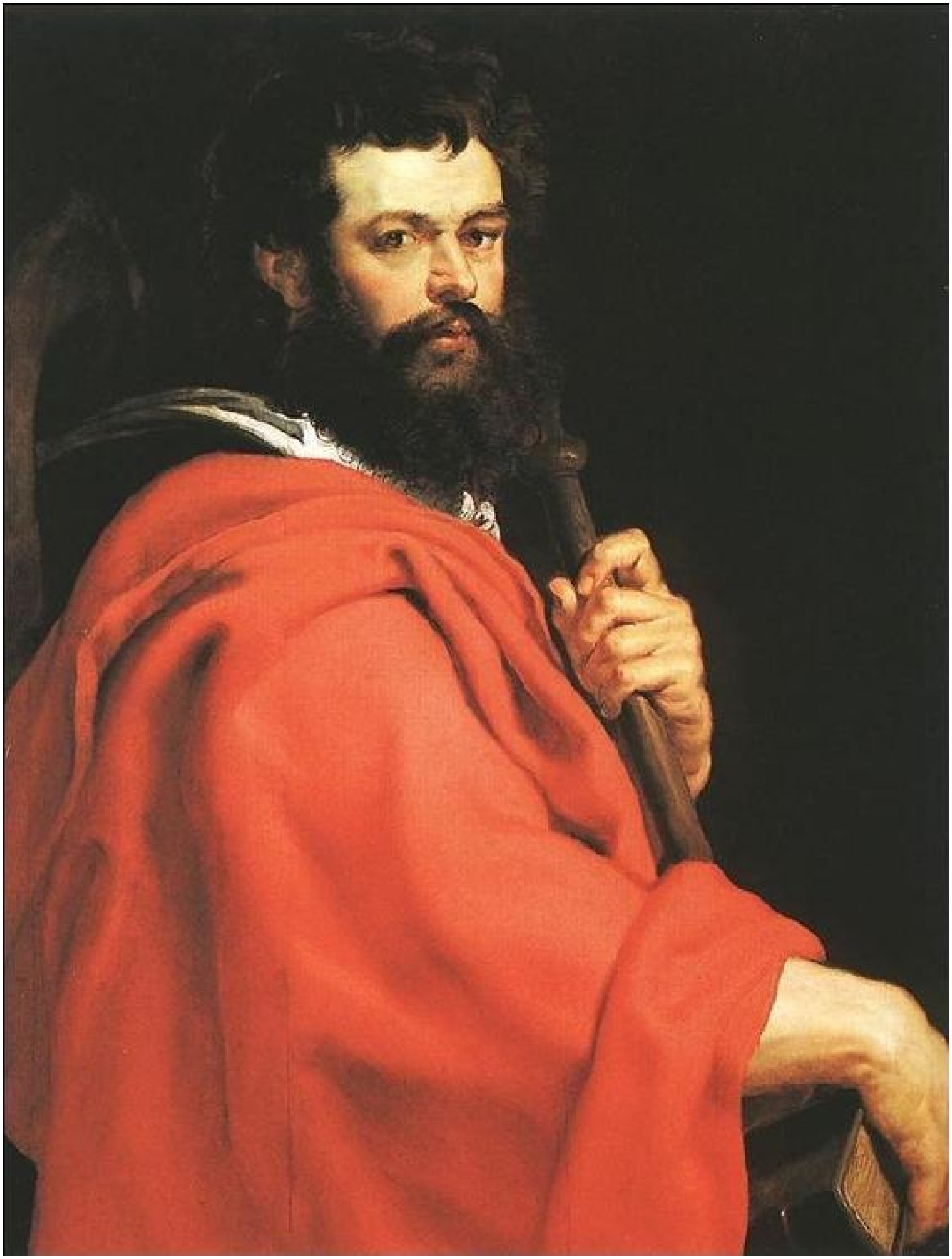
Jupiter and Callisto

1613
202 x 305 cm
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, Germany



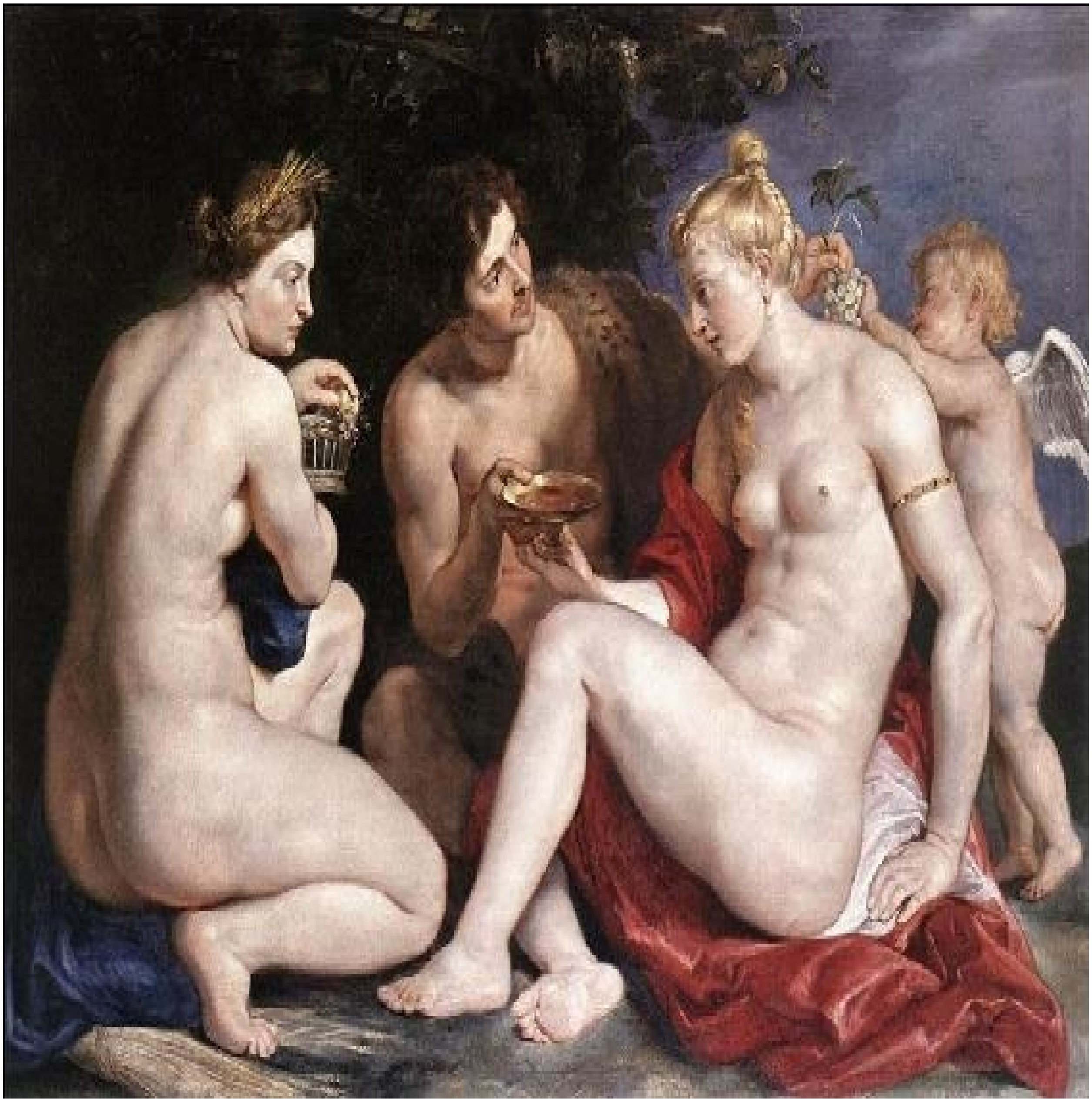
St. James the Apostle

1613
108 x 84 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



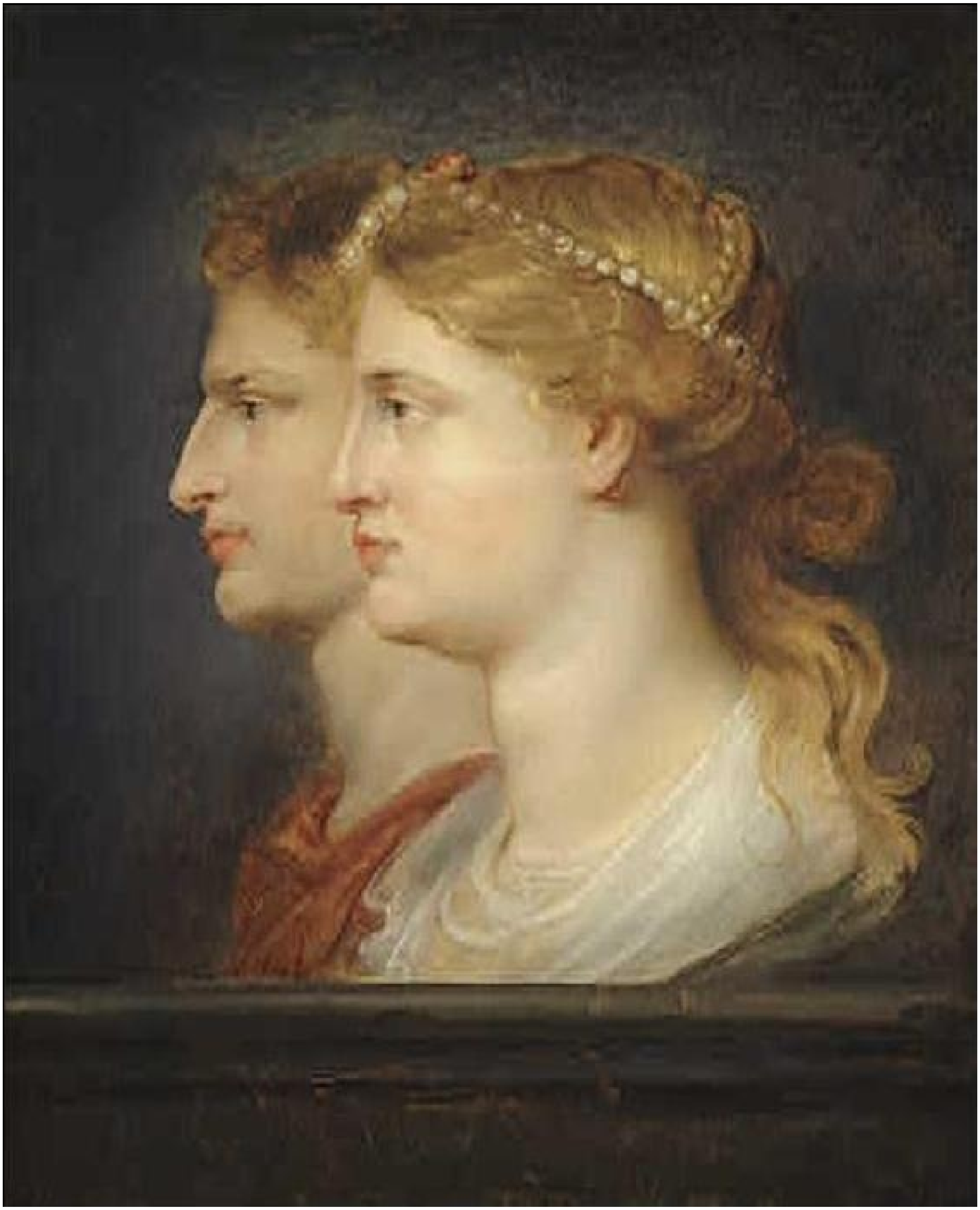
Venus, Cupid, Bacchus and Ceres

1613
141 x 200 cm
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, Germany



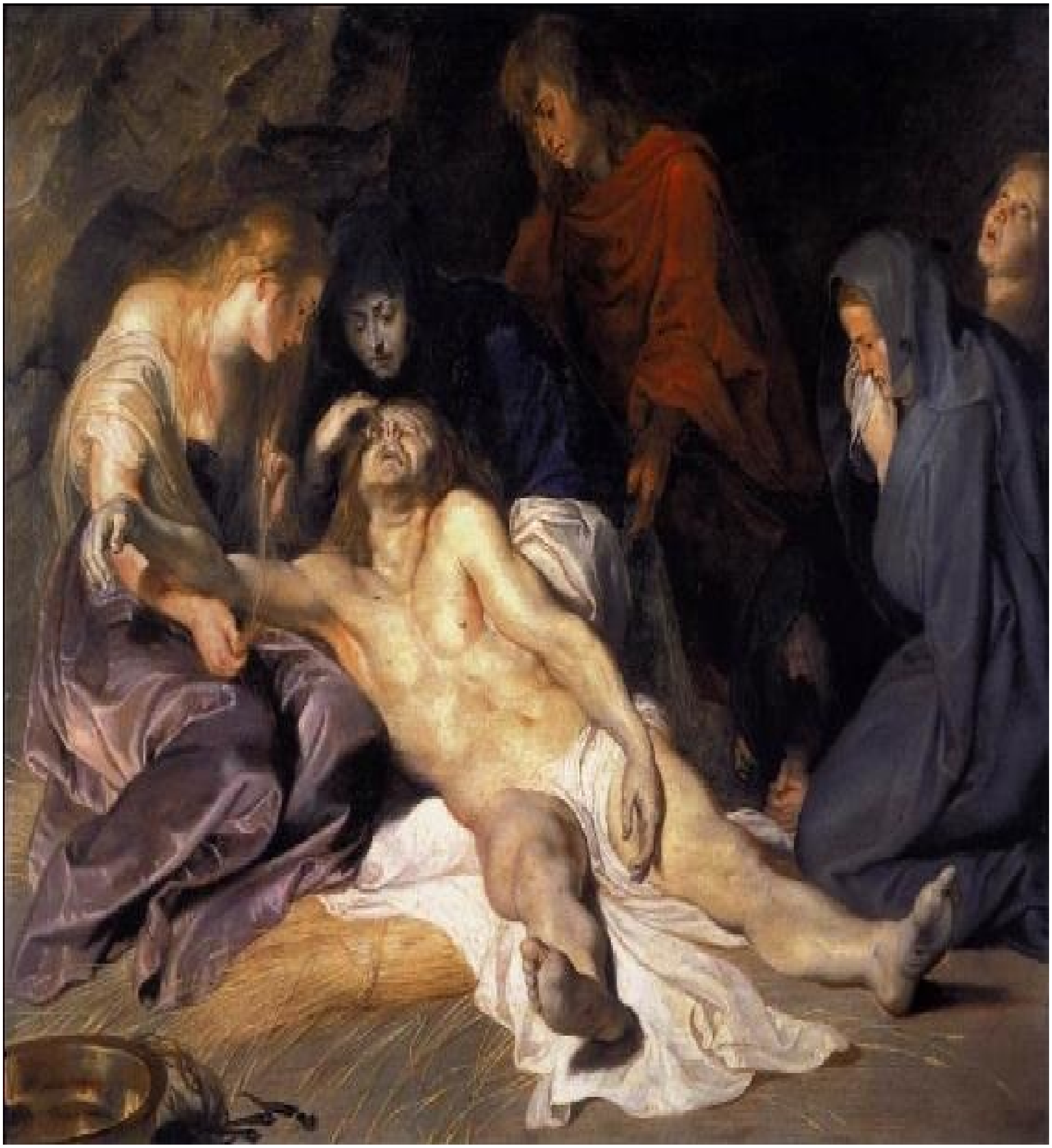
Agrippina and Germanicus

c.1614
66 x 57 cm



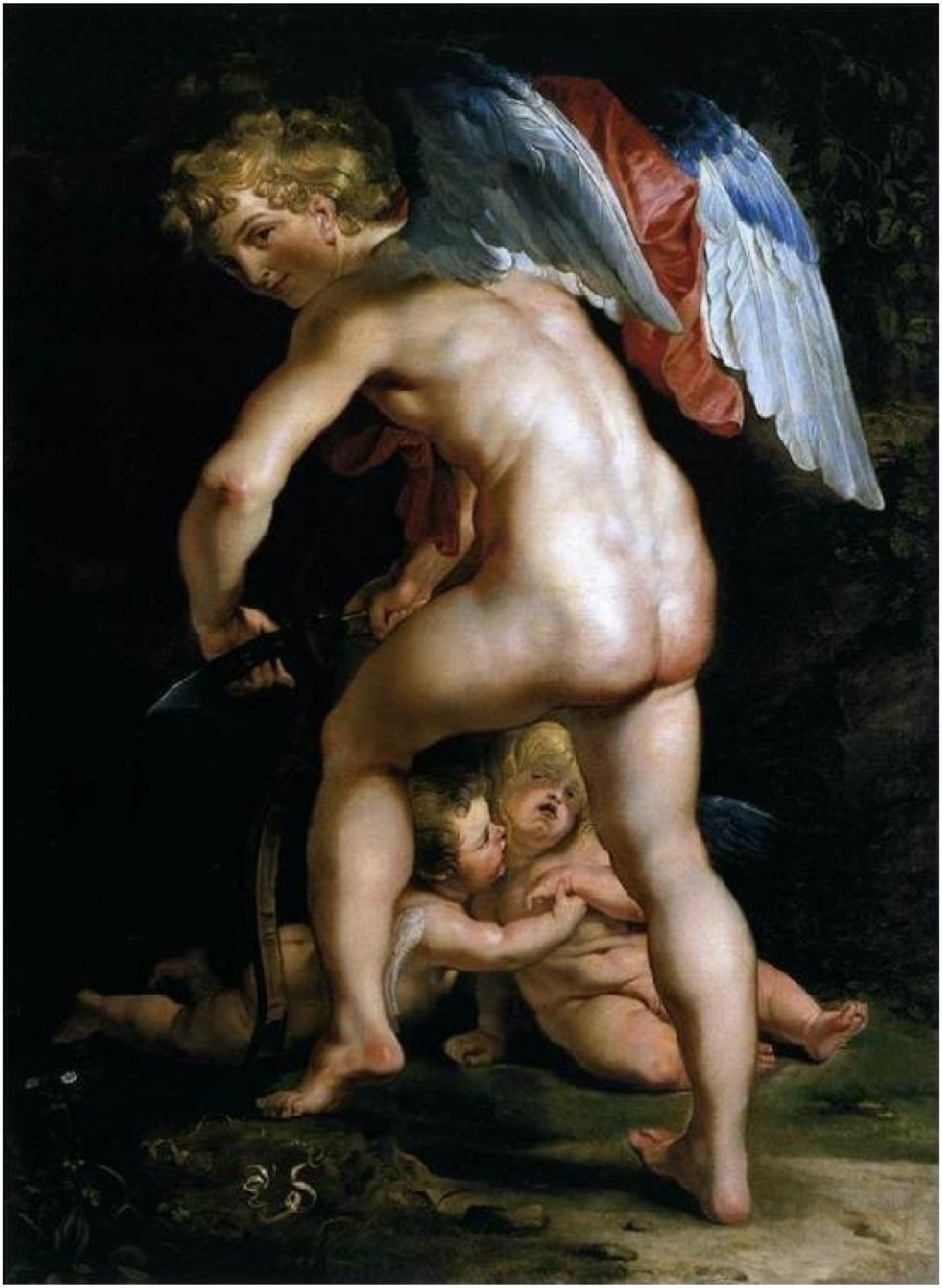
The Lamentation

1614
Oil on wood, 41 x 53 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



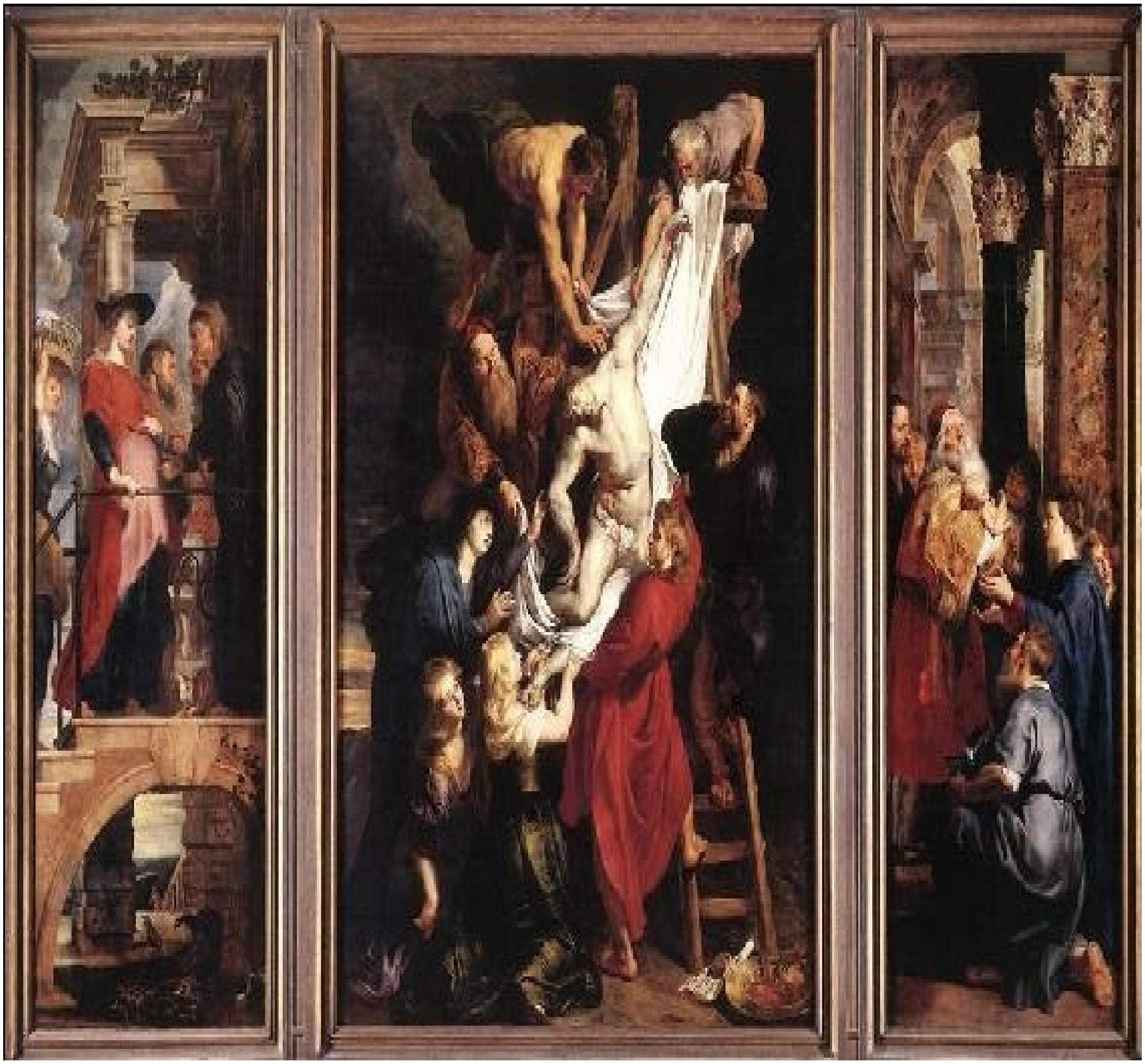
Cupid Making His Bow

1614
421 x 311 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



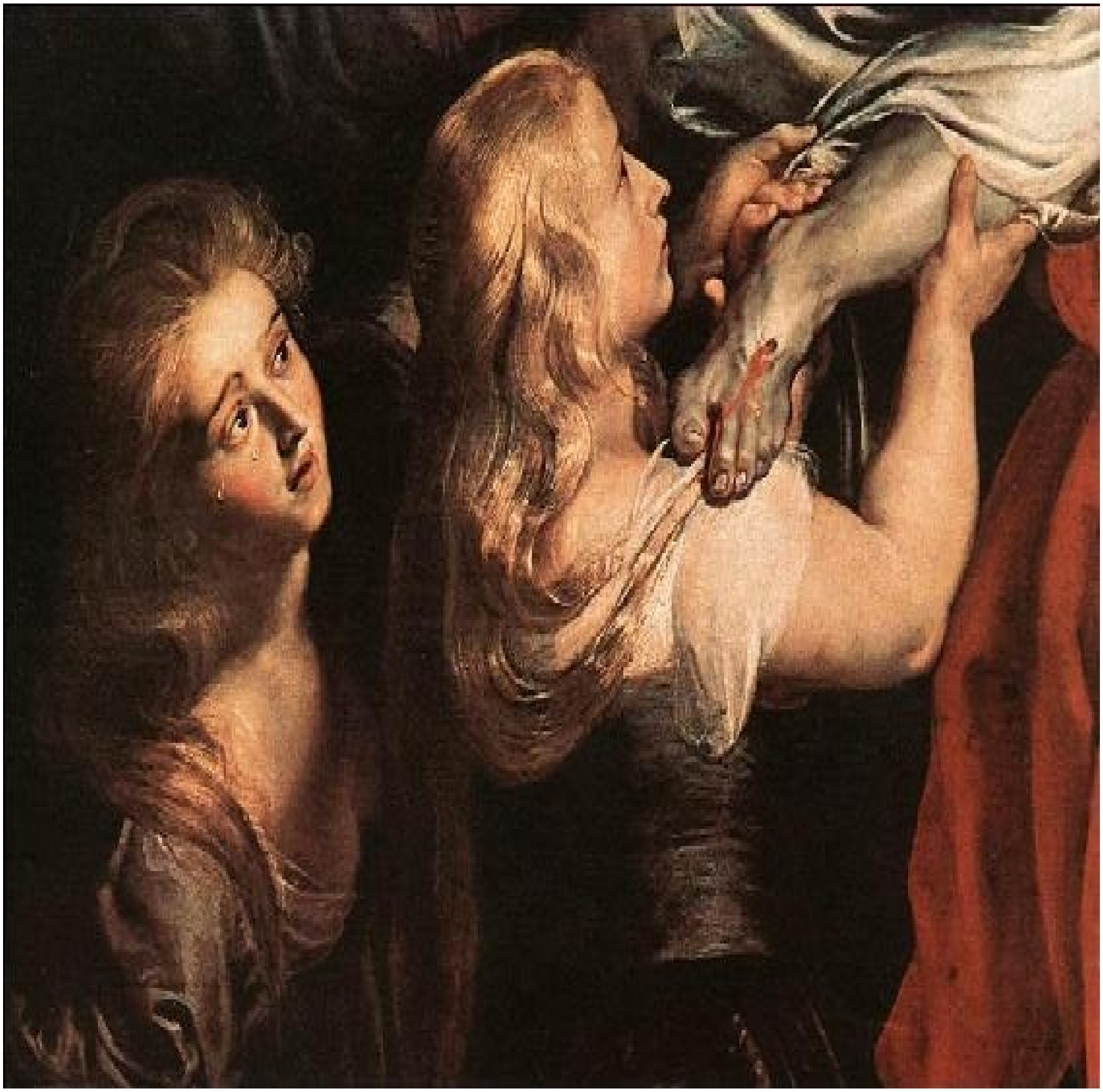
Descent from the Cross

1614
150 x 420 cm
Onze Lieve Vrouwkerk, Antwerp Cathedral, Belgium



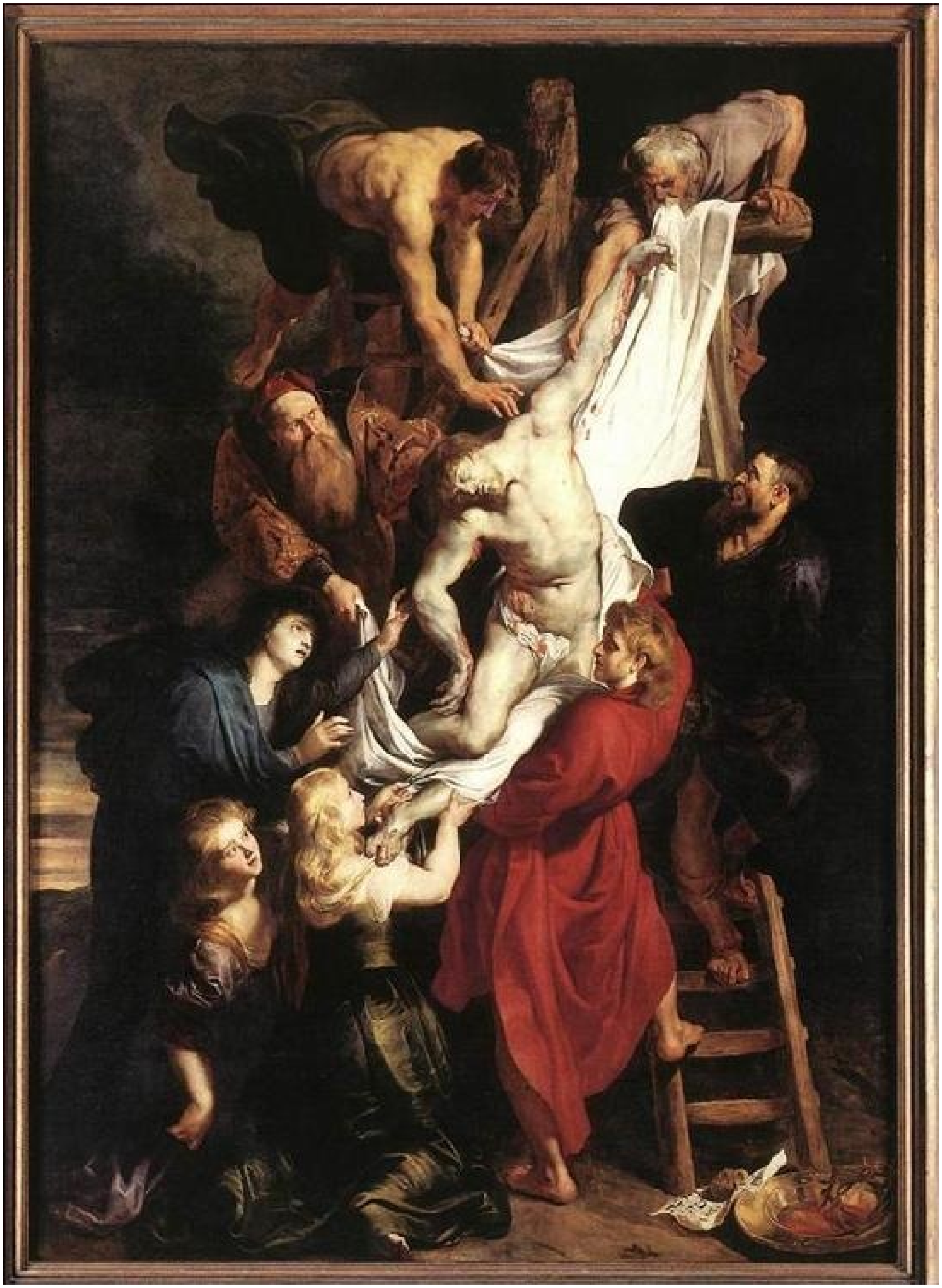
Descent from the Cross

1614



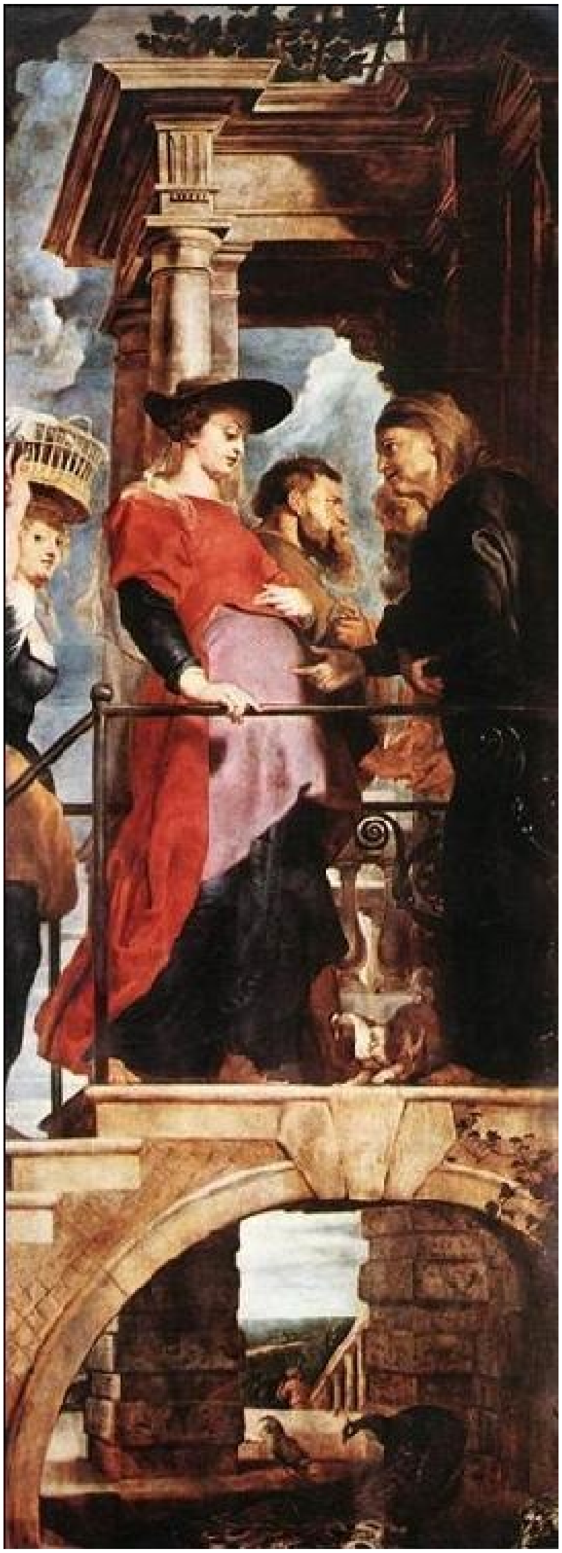
Descent from the Cross (centre)

1614
421 x 311 cm



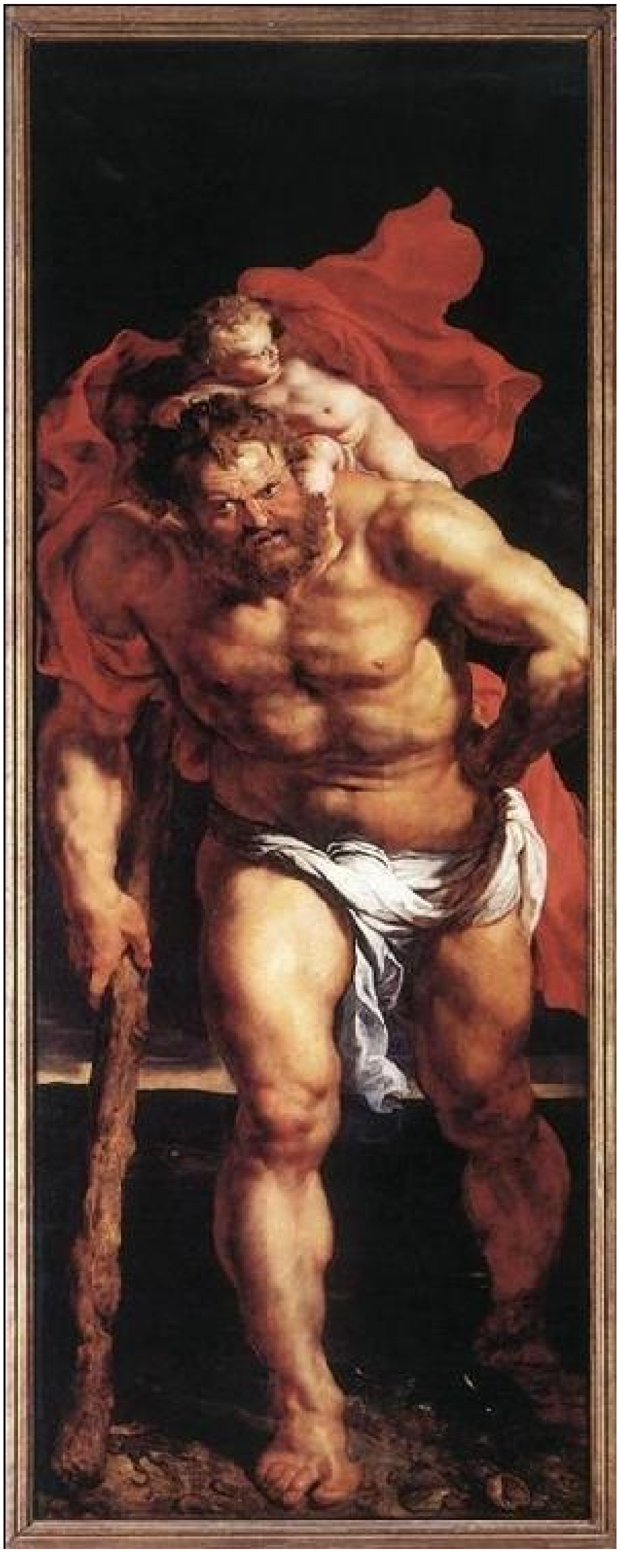
Descent from the Cross (left)

1614
421 x 153 cm



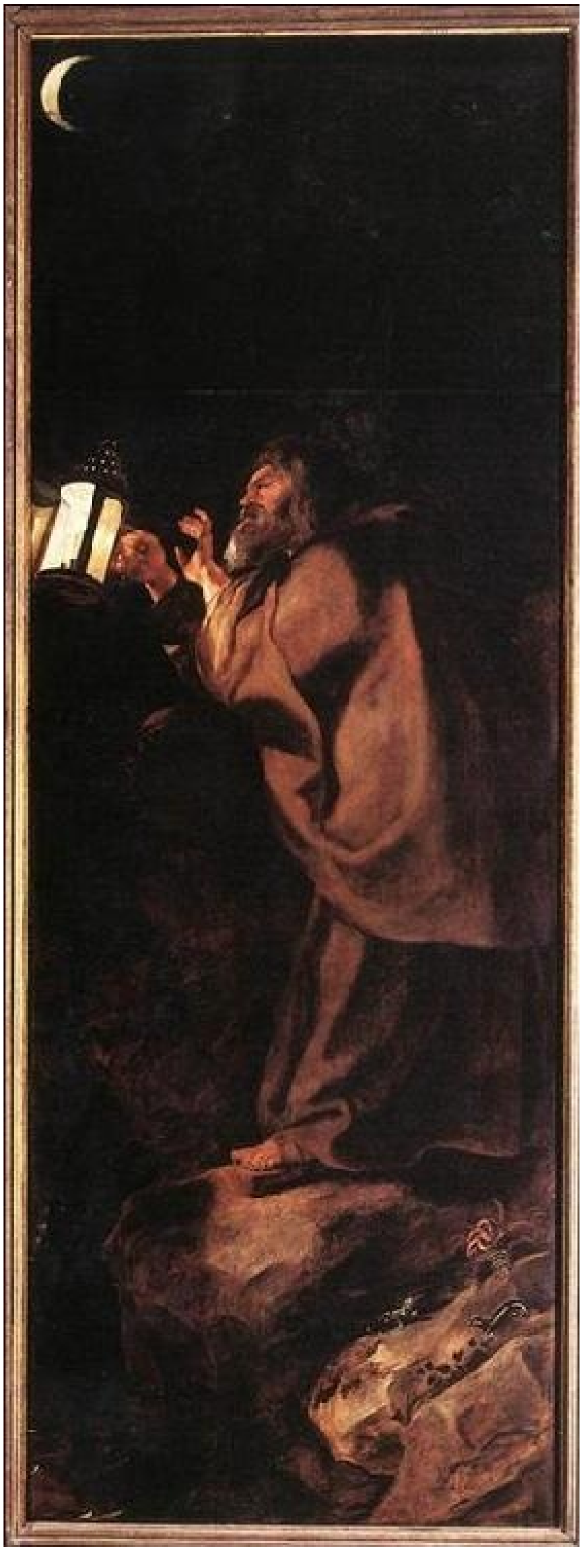
Descent from the Cross (outside left)

1614
421 x 153 cm



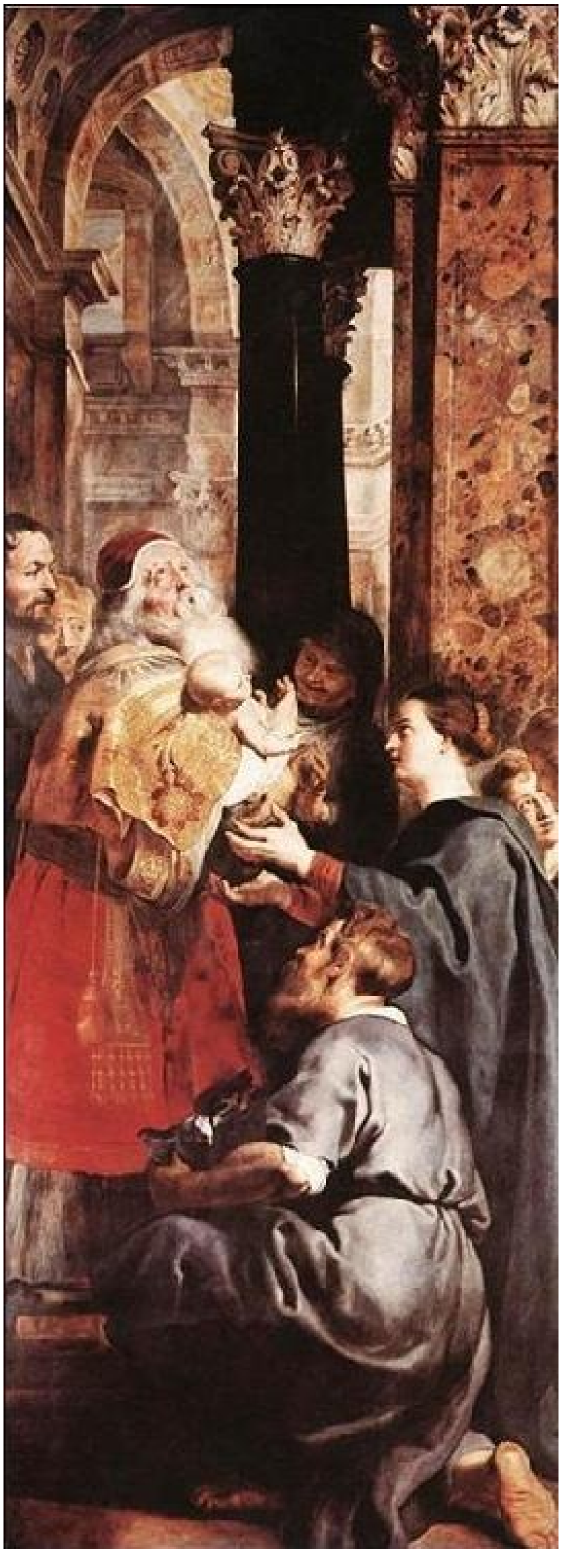
Descent from the Cross (outside right)

1614
421 x 153 cm



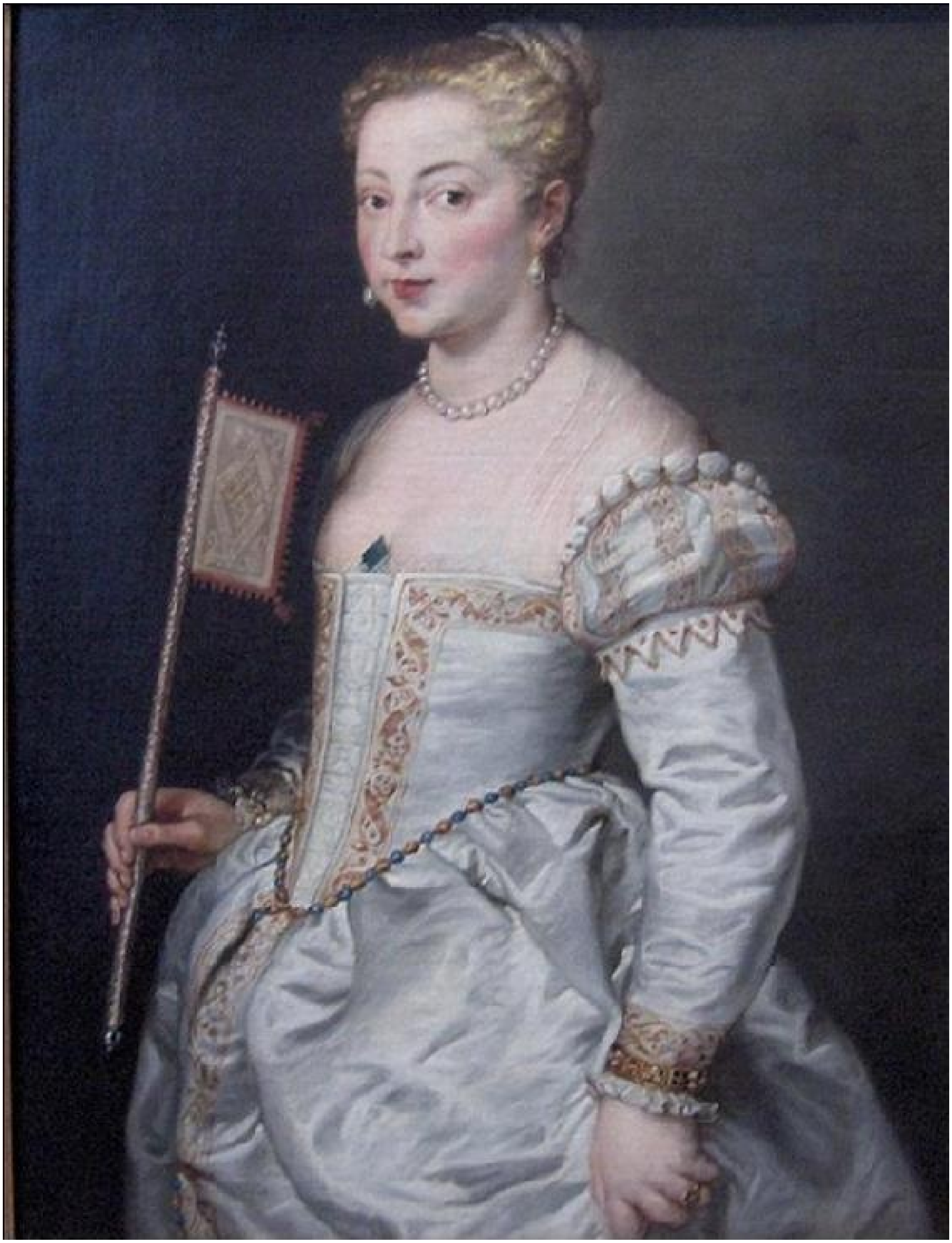
Descent from the Cross (right)

1614
421 x 153 cm



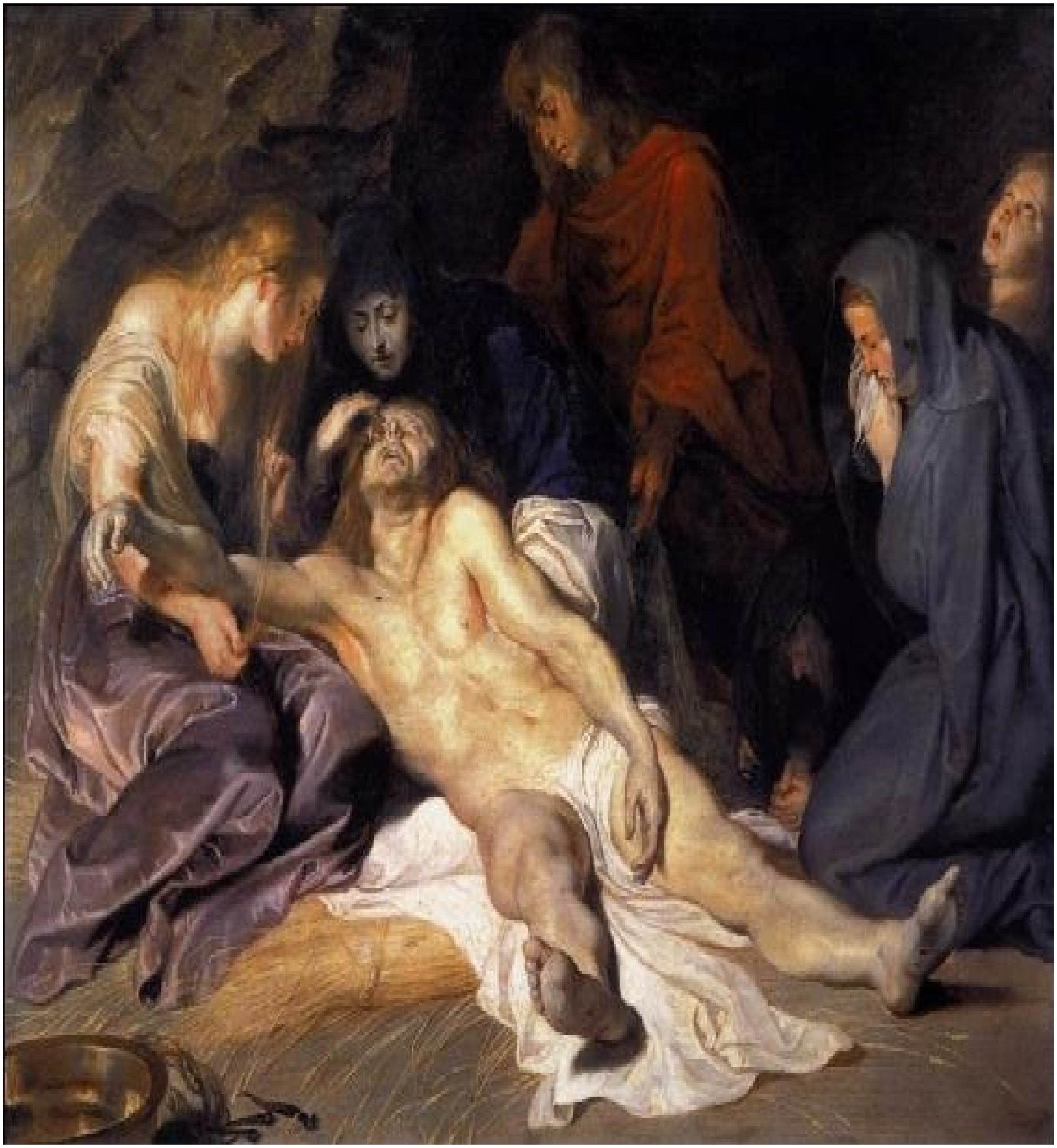
Girl with Fan

c.1614



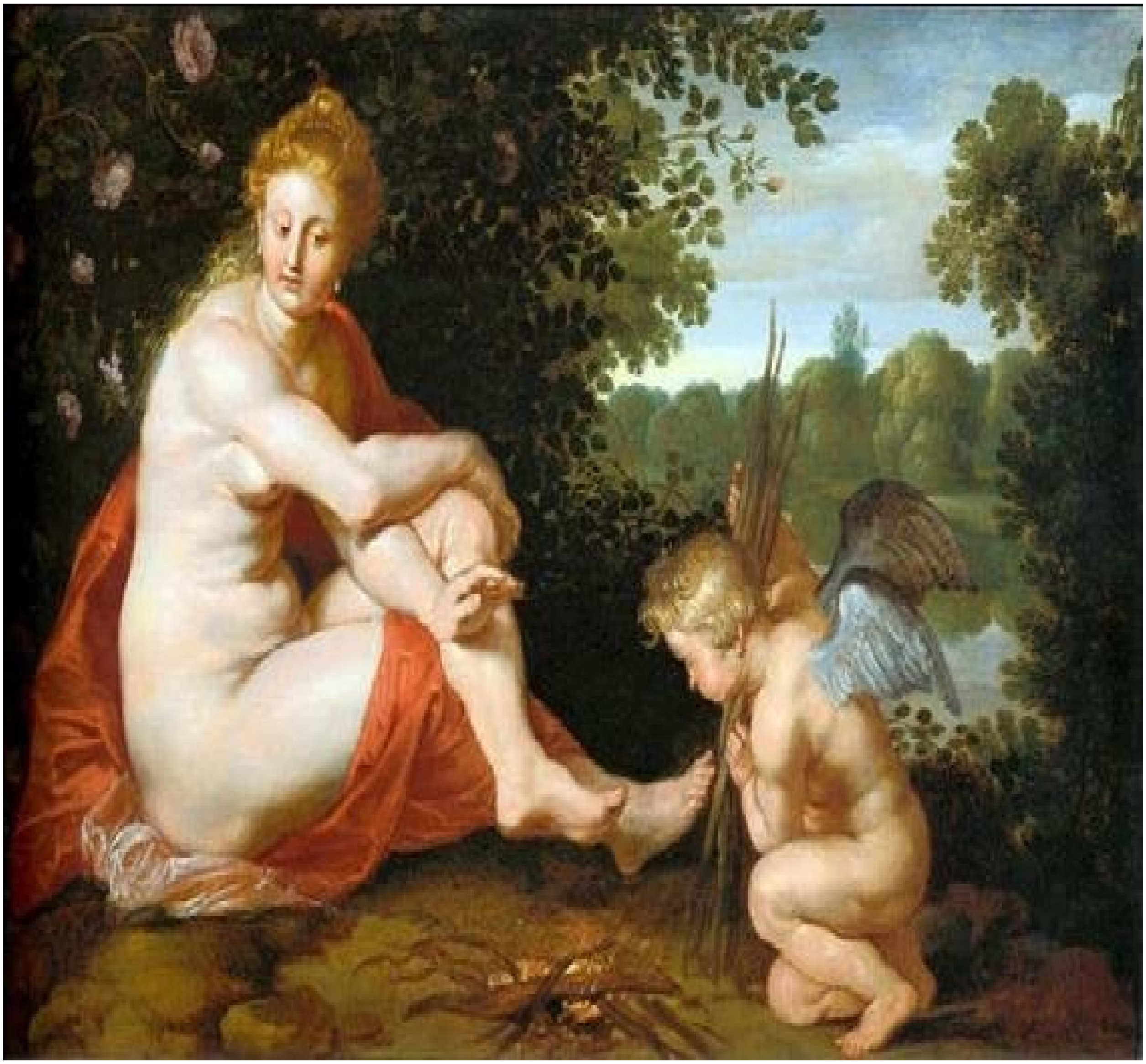
Lament of Christ

1614
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



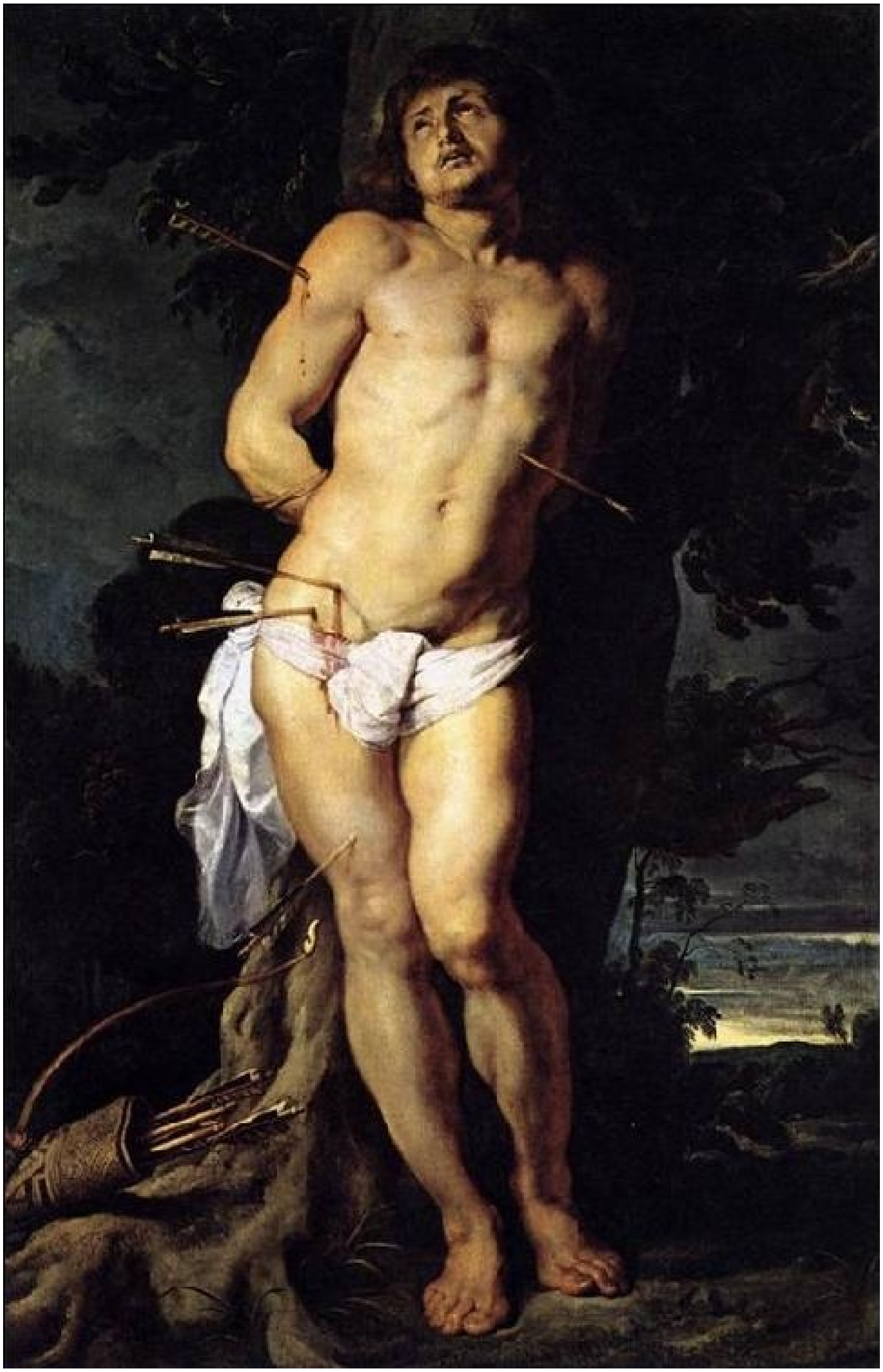
Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus

c.1614
52 x 79 cm



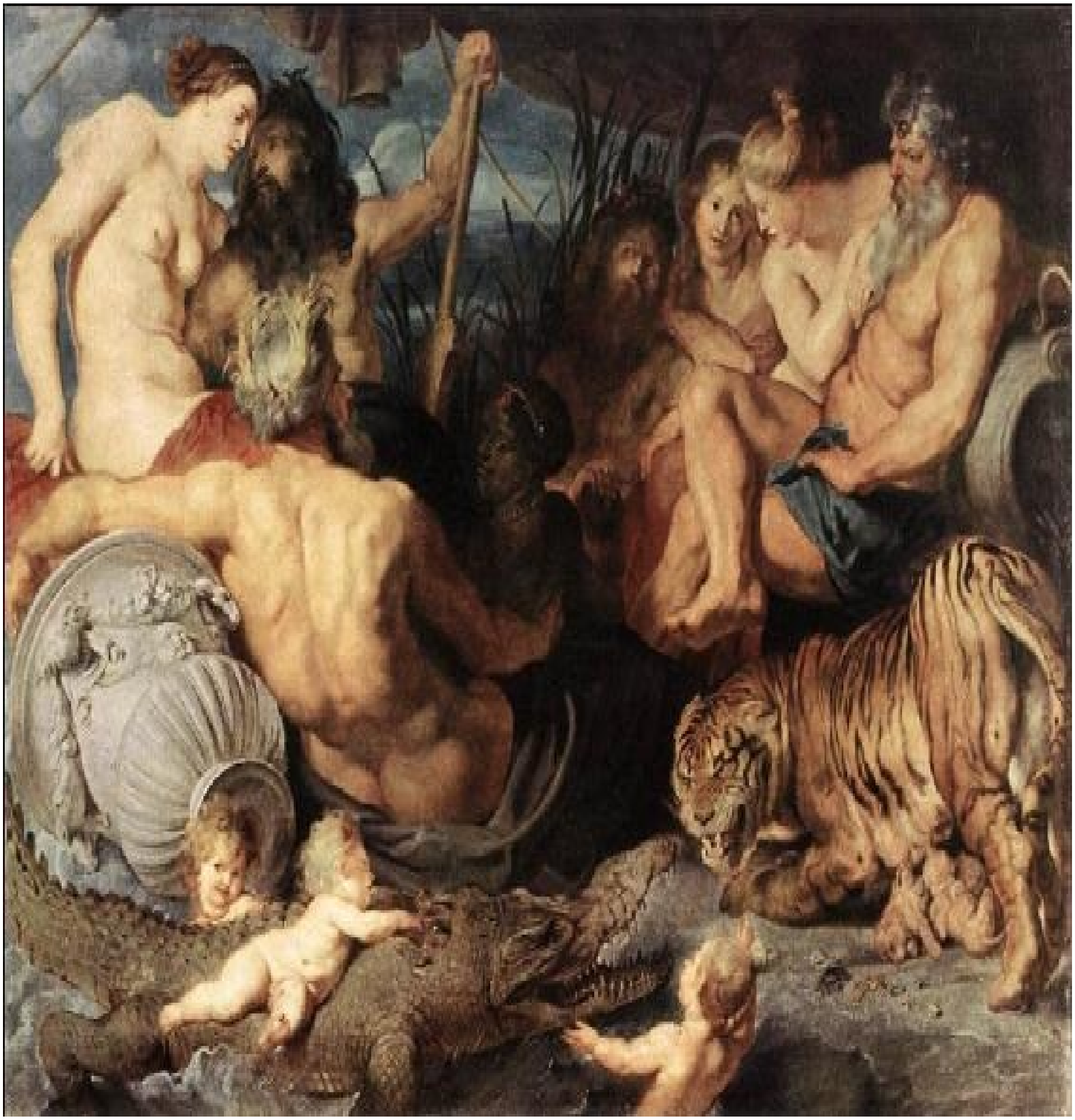
St. Sebastian

c.1614
200 x 120 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany



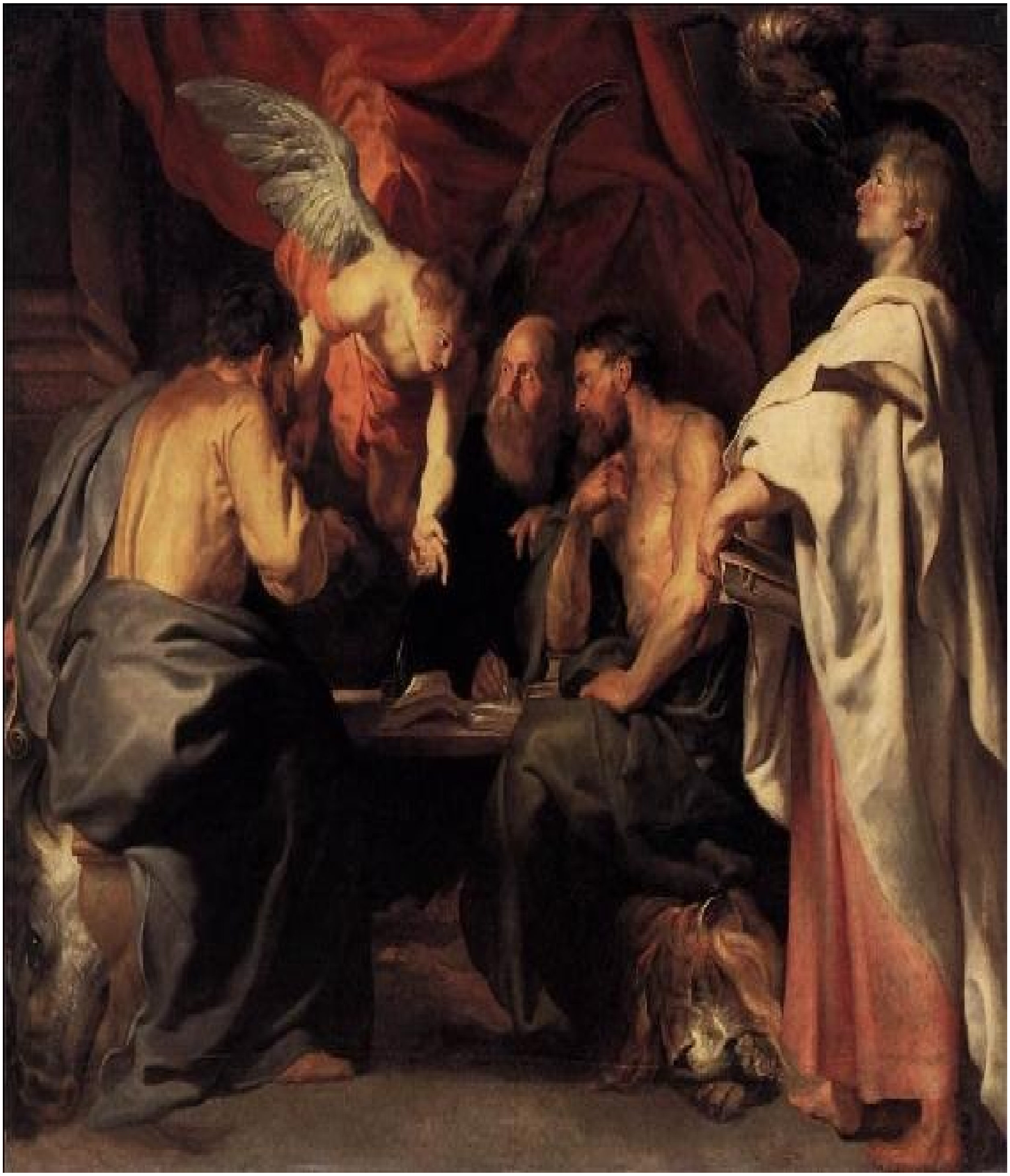
The Four Continents

c.1614
283 x 208 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



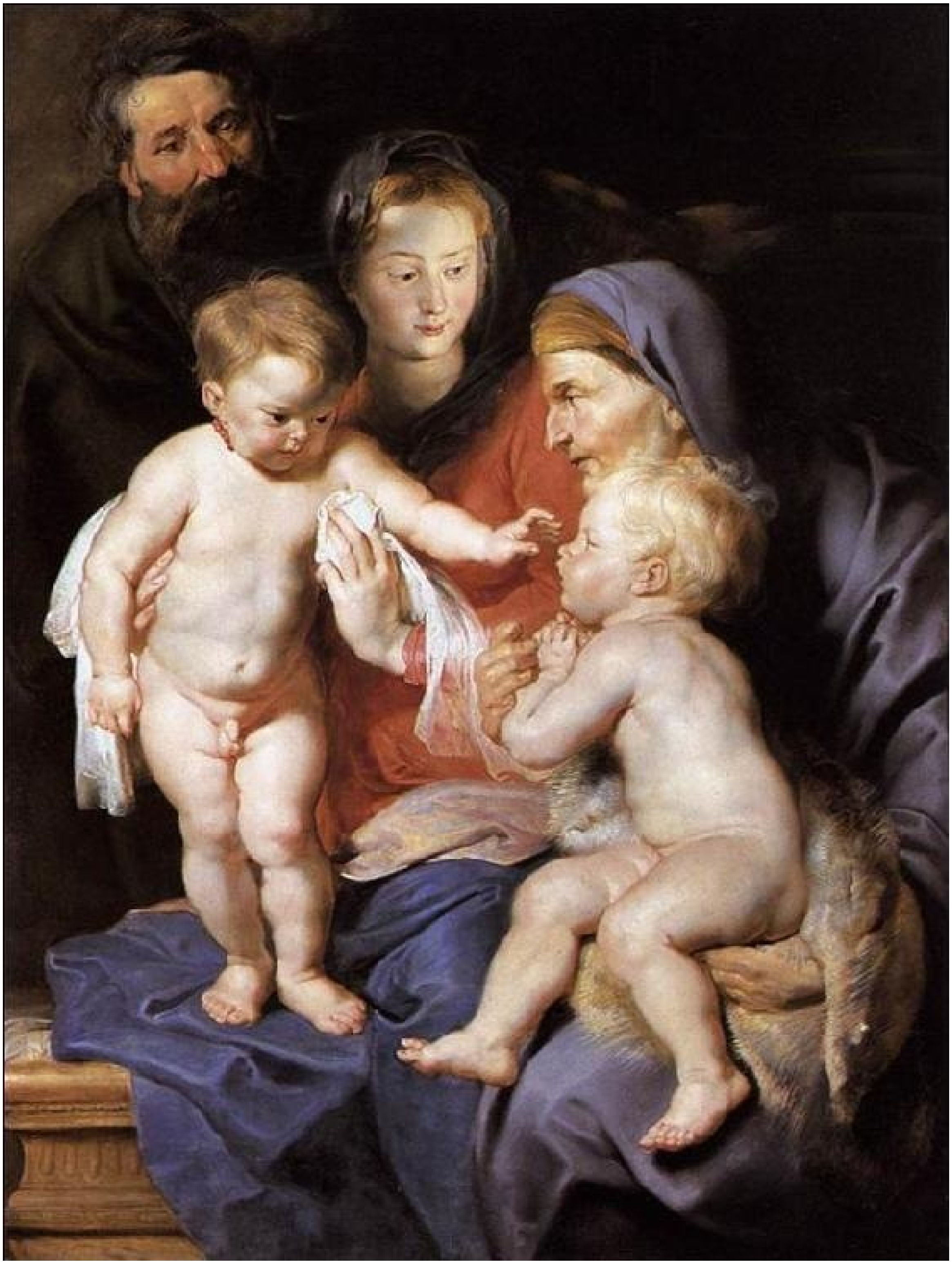
The Four Evangelists

c.1614
224 x 270 cm



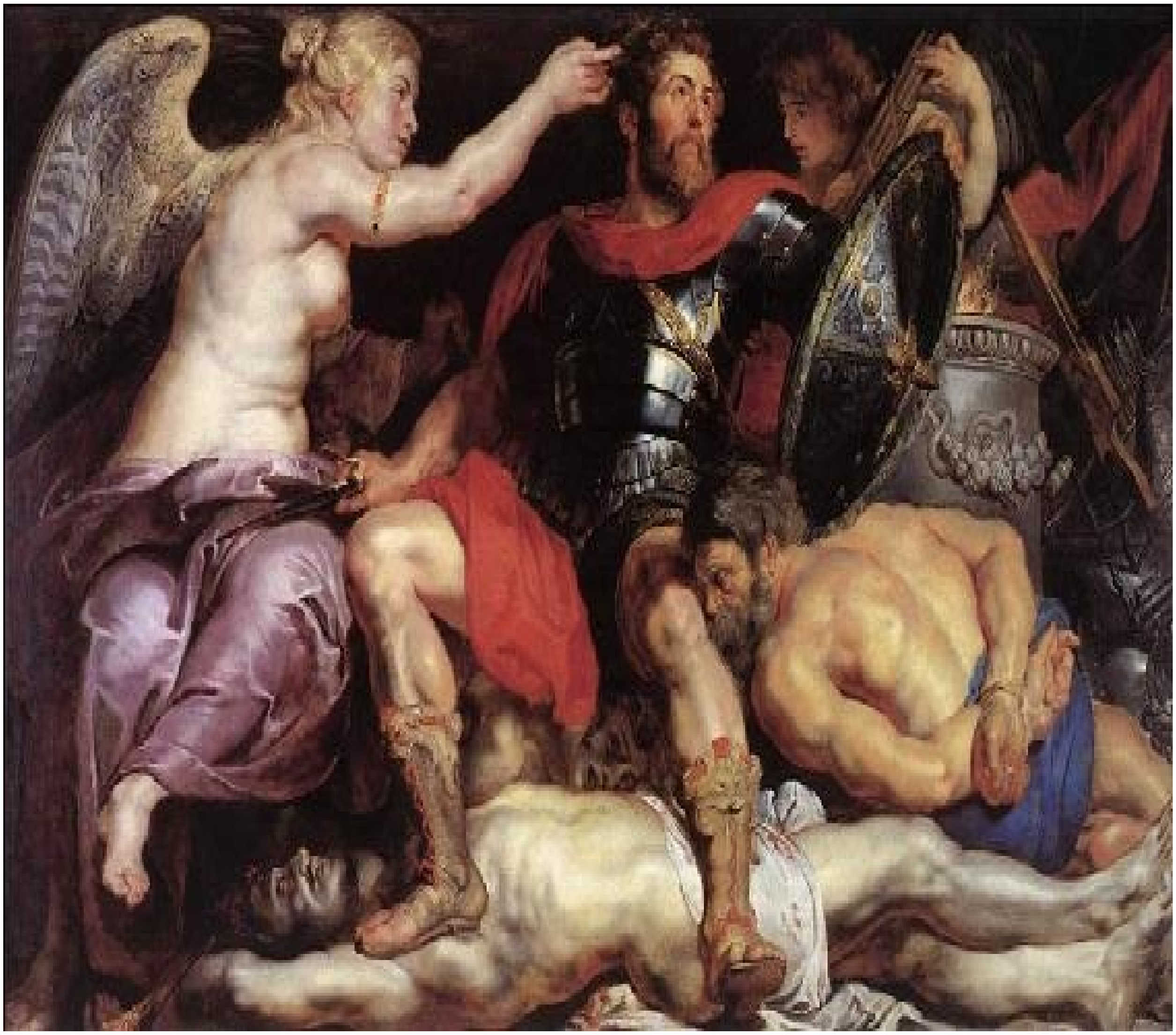
The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth and the Infant St. John the Baptist

c.1614
138 x 102 cm
Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, Germany



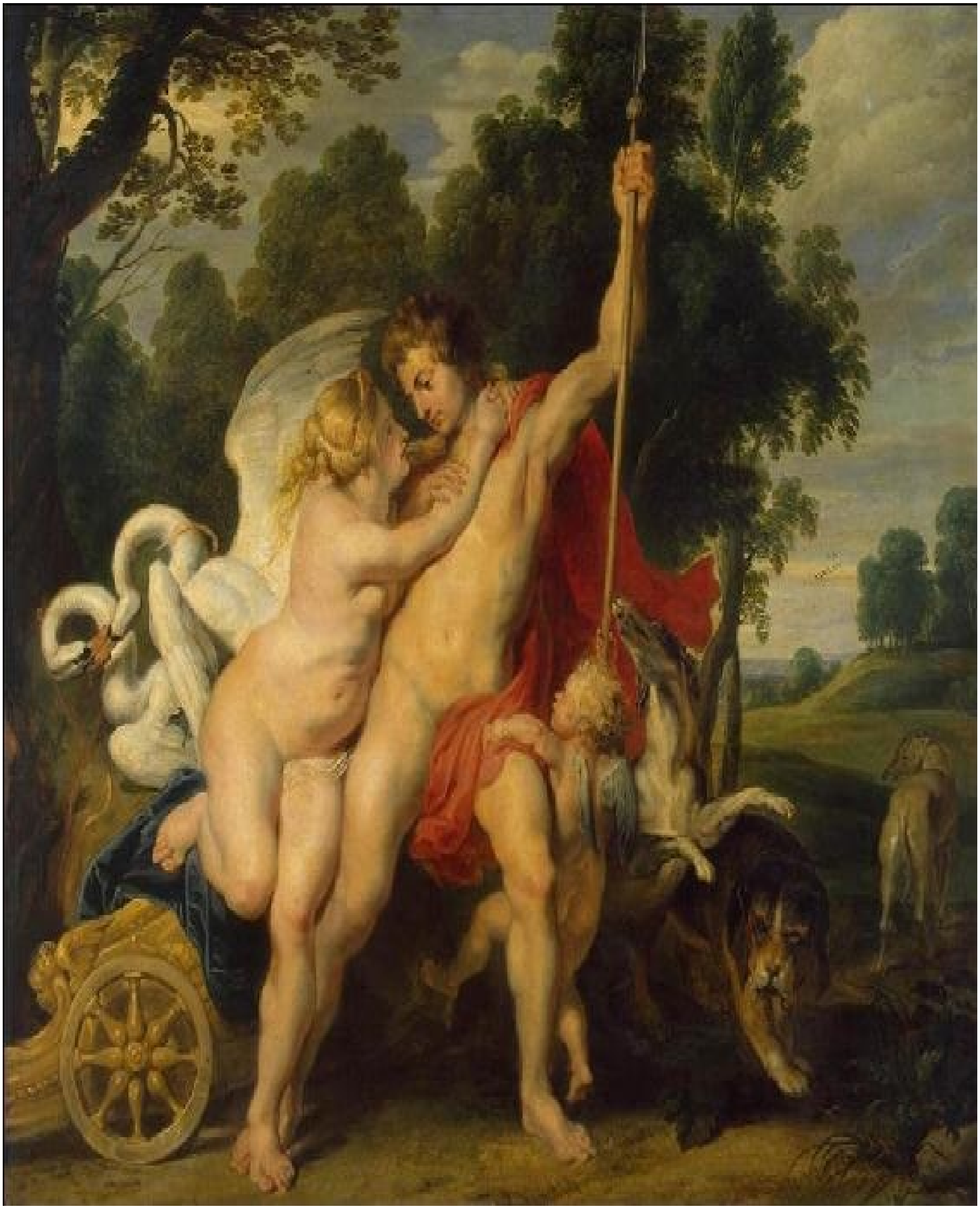
The Triumph of the Victory

c.1614
263 x 160.5 cm



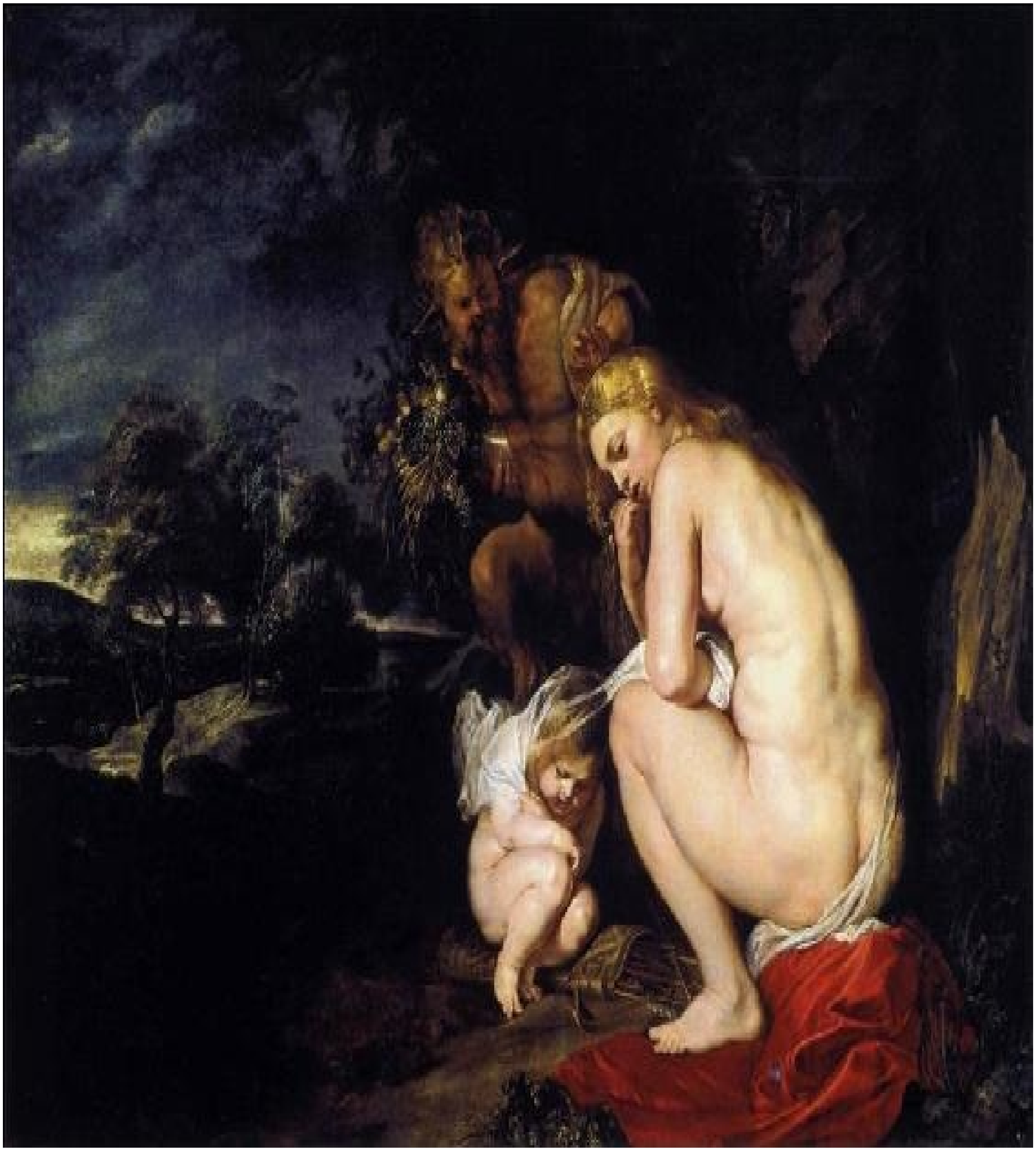
Venus and Adonis

c.1614
83 x 91 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



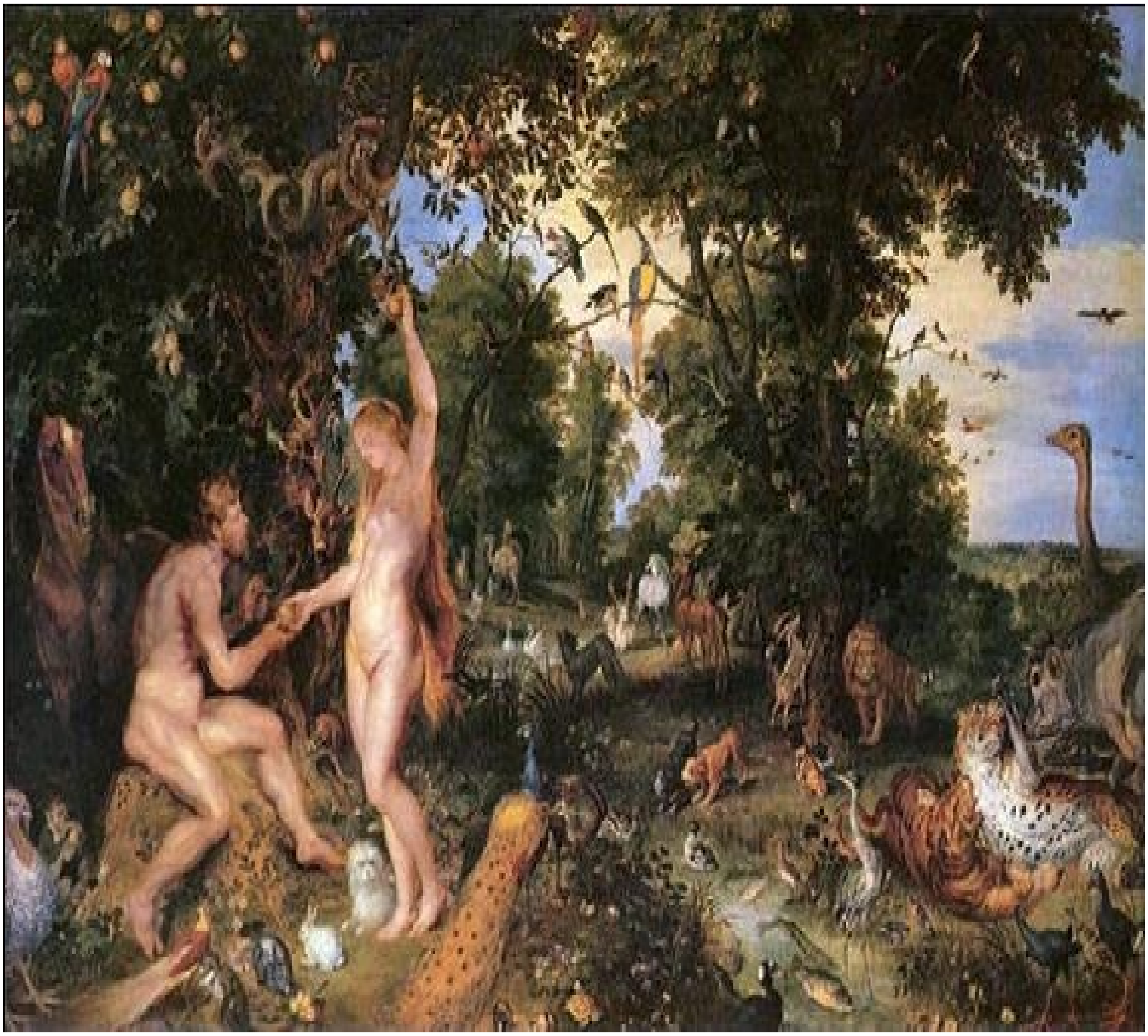
Venus Frigida

c.1614
148 x 185 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten



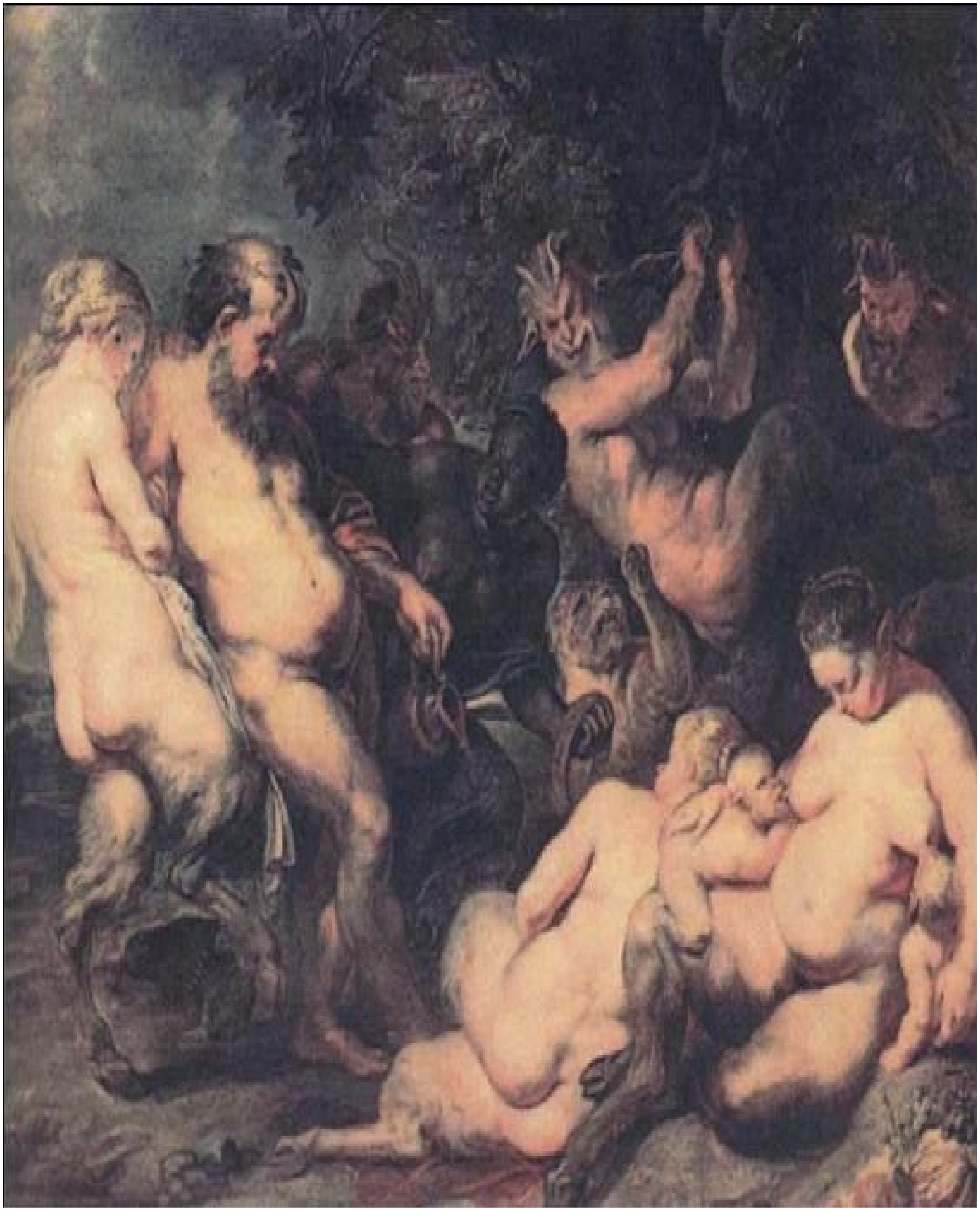
Adam and Eve in Worthy Paradise

c.1615



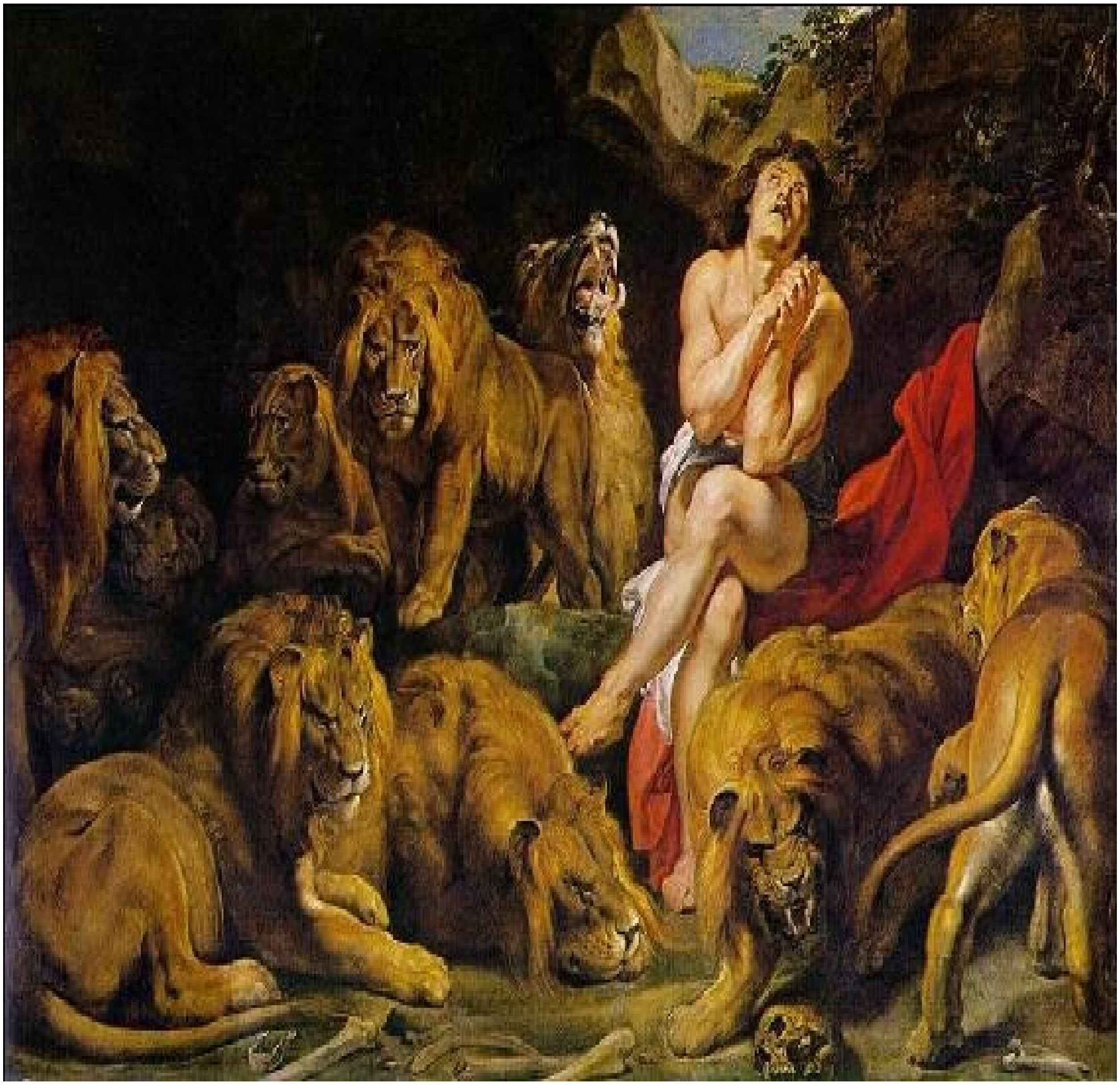
Bacchanale

1615



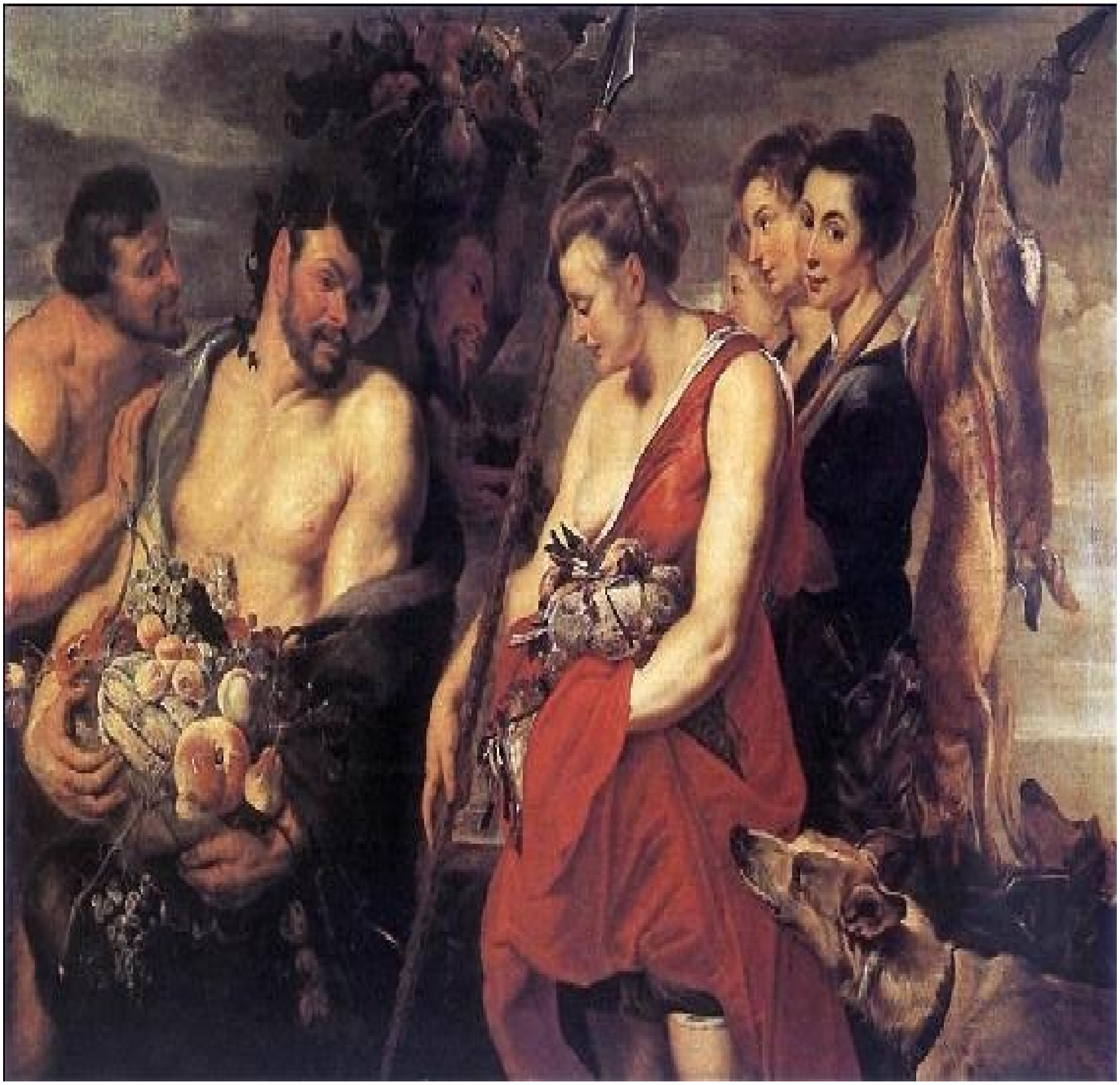
Daniel in the Lion’s Den

c.1615
224.3 x 330.4 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washingon, DC, USA



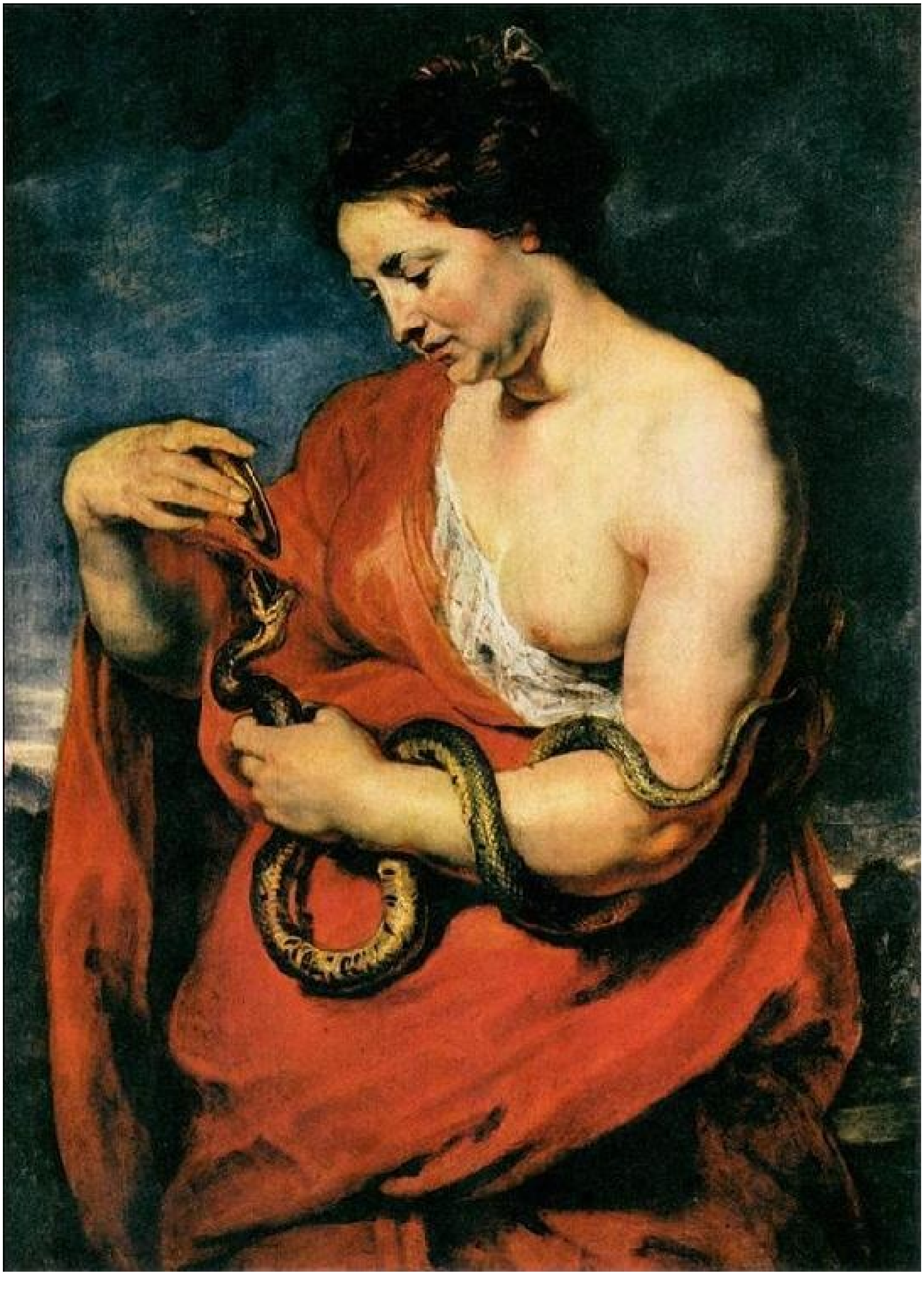
Diana Presentig the Catch to Pan

1615
145 x 211.5 cm
National Museum of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia



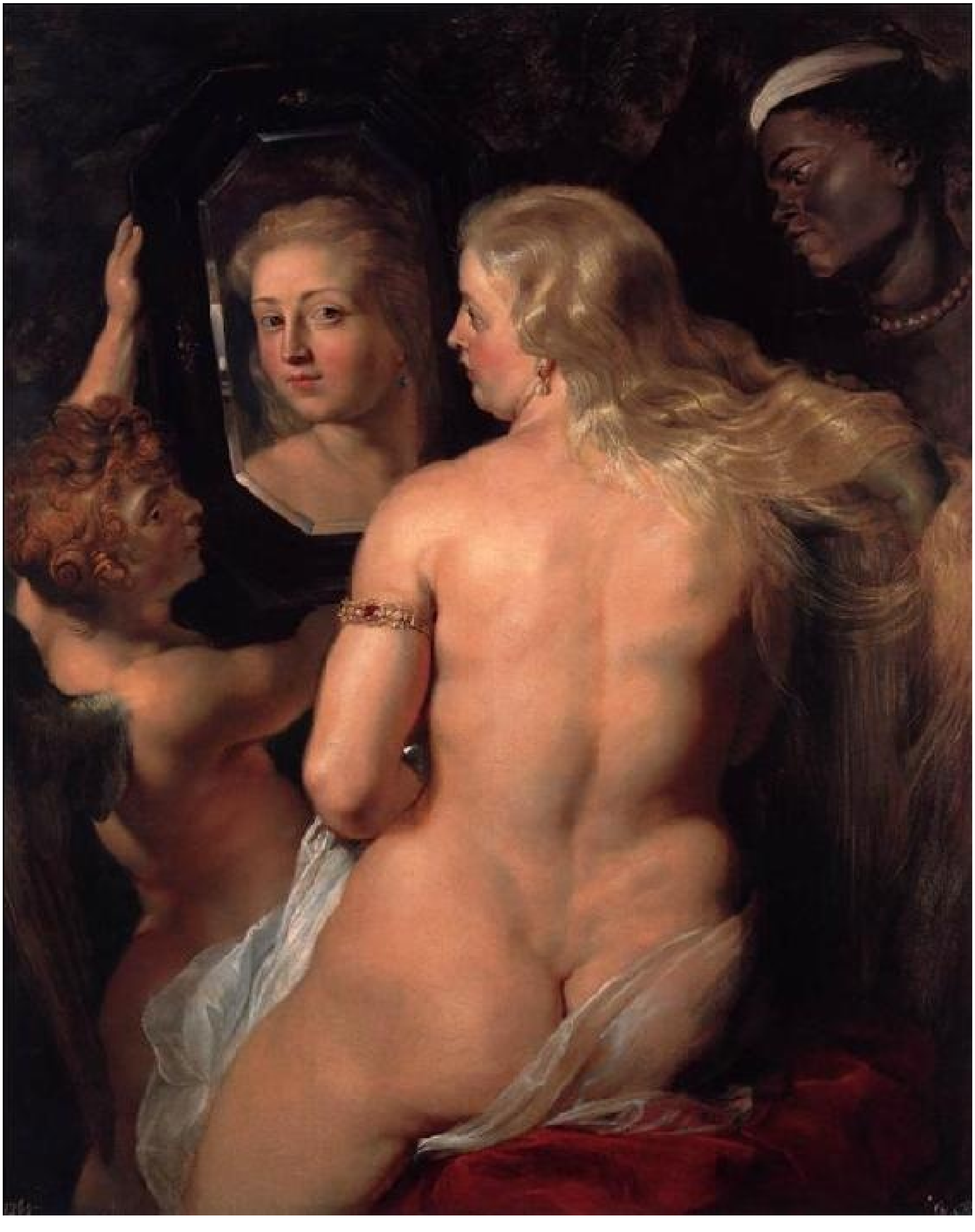
Hygeia, Goddess of Health

c.1615
130 x 74 cm
Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI, USA



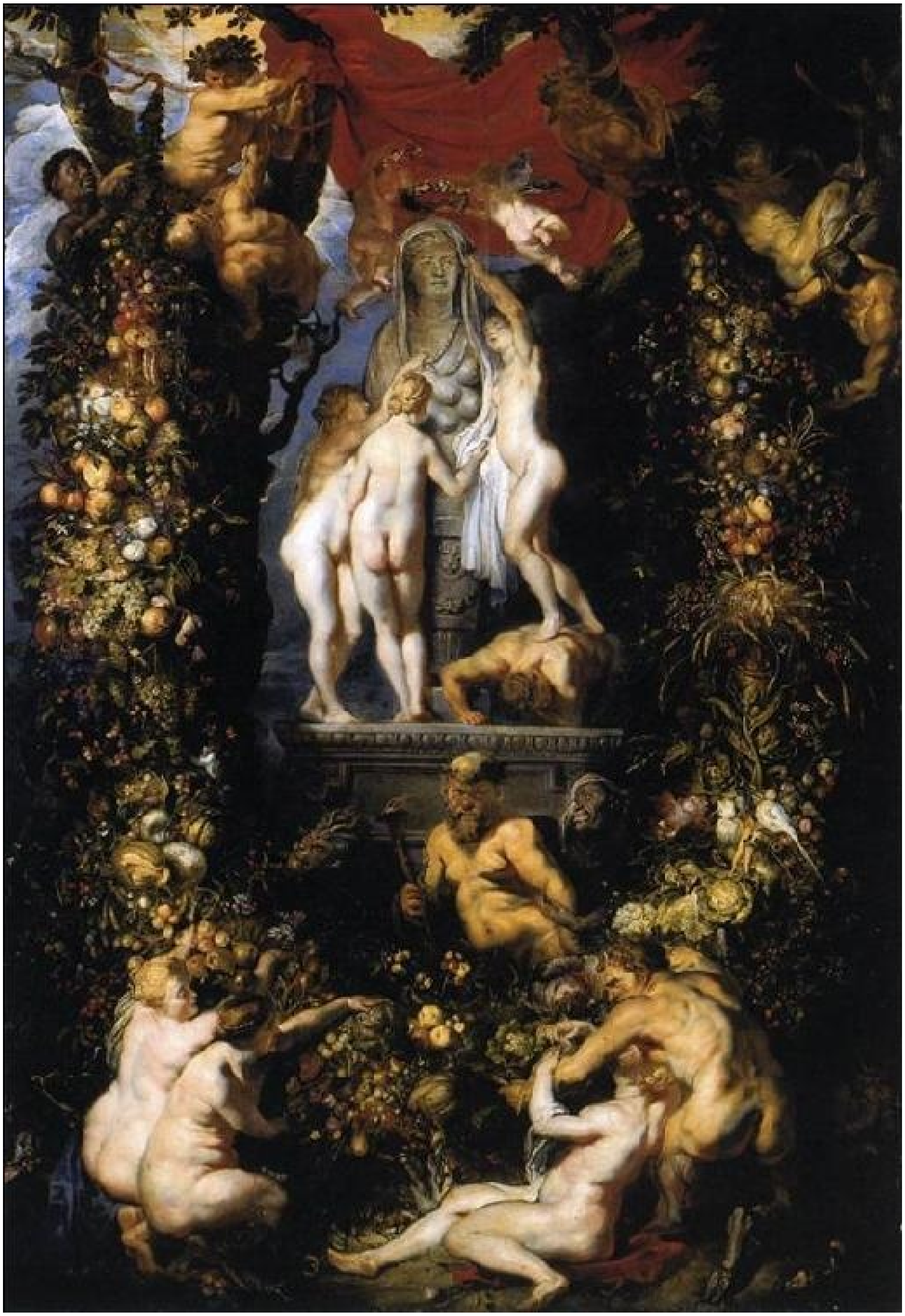
Morning Toilet of Venus

1615



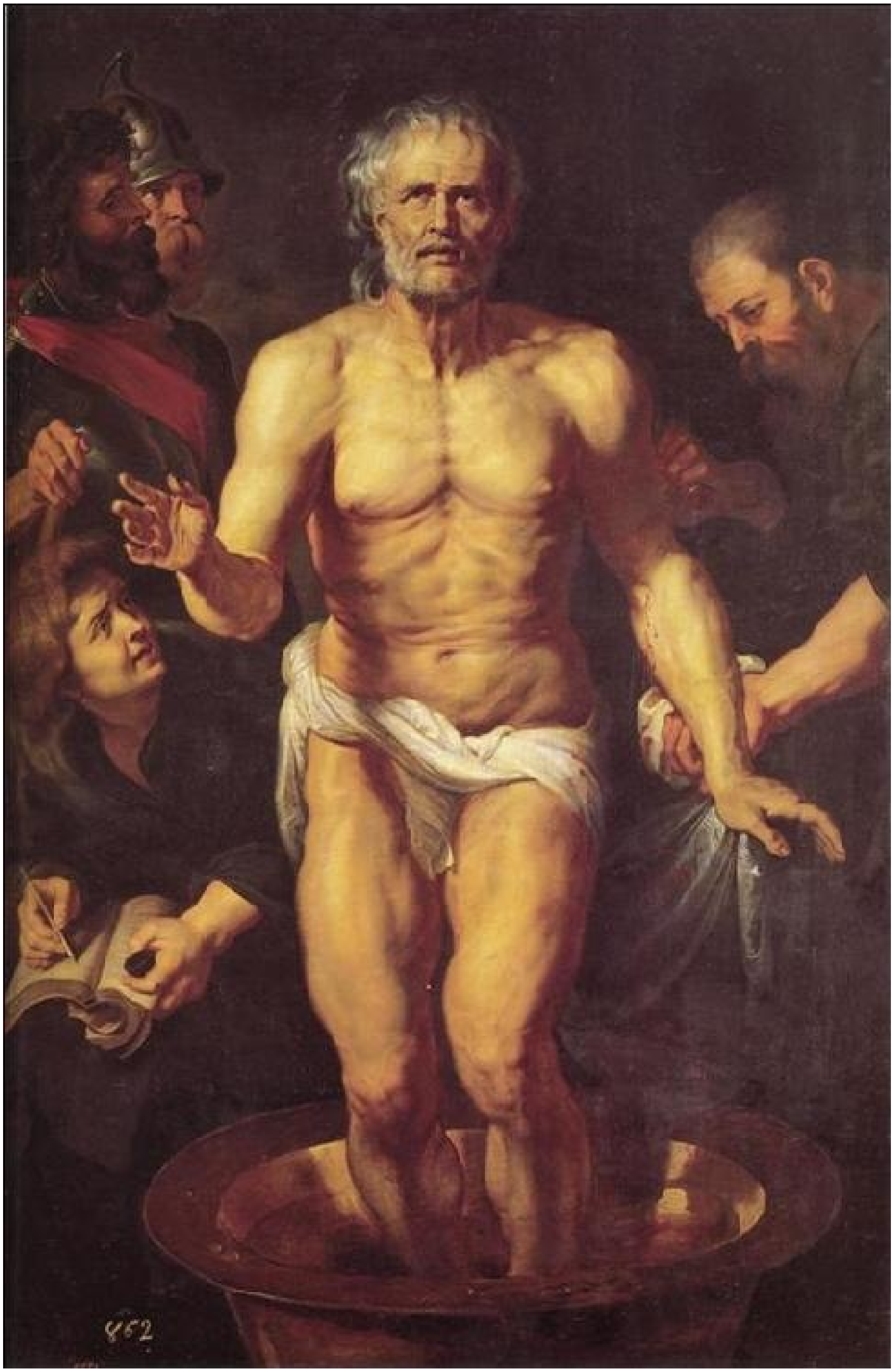
Nature Adorning the Three Graces

c.1615
107 x 72 cm
Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, Scotland



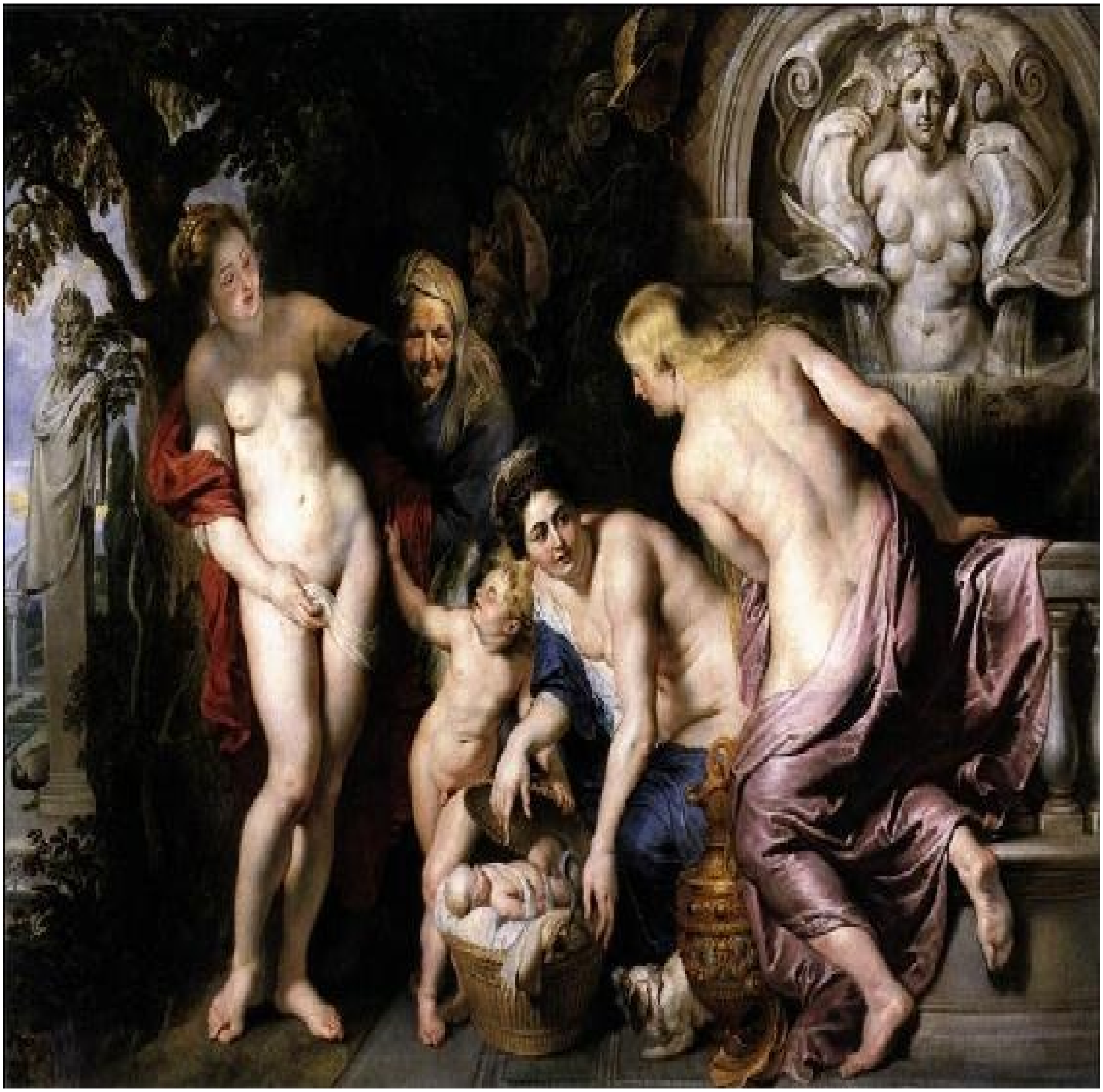
The Death of Seneca

c.1615


462

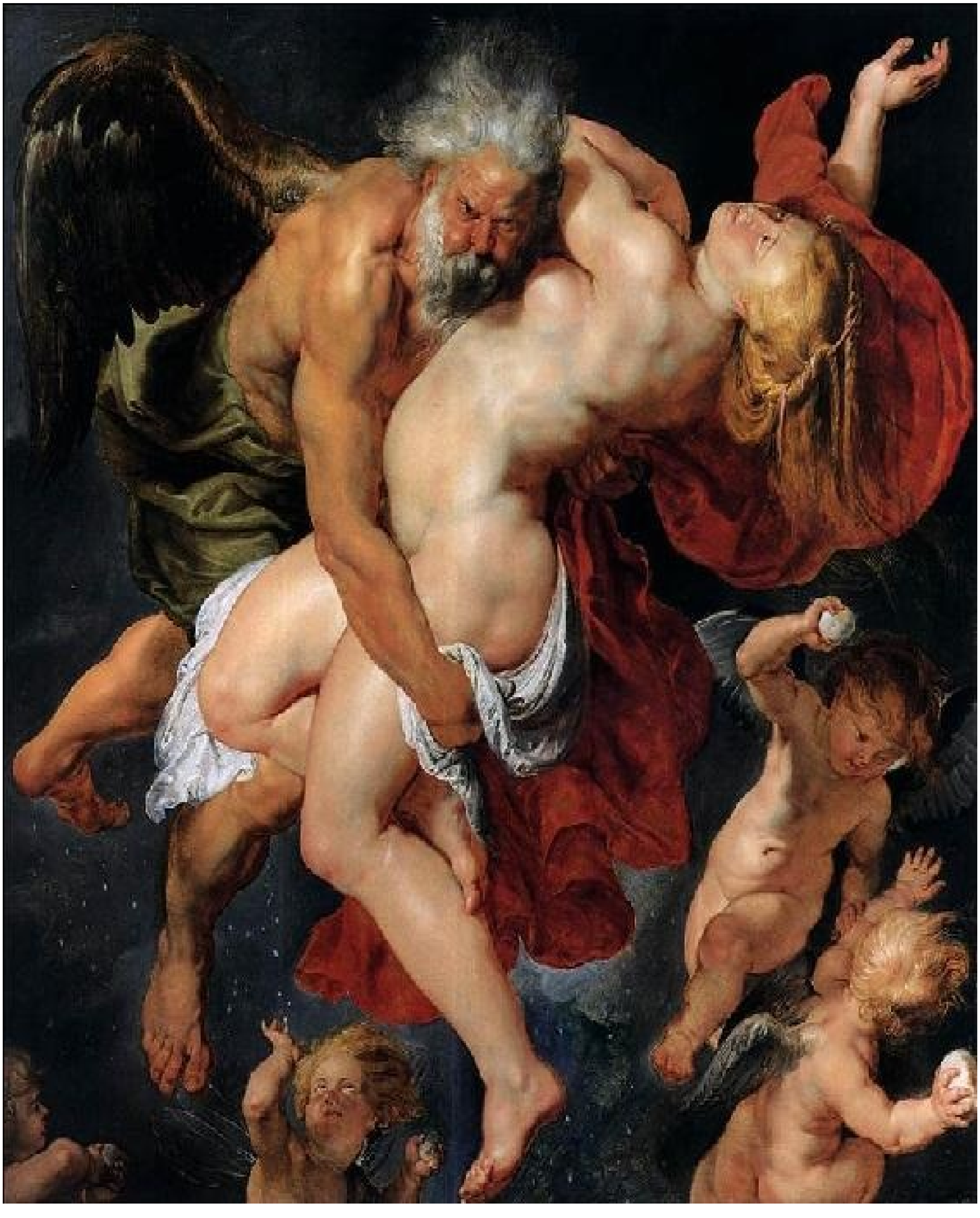
The Discovery of the Child Erichthonius

c.1615
218 x 317 cm



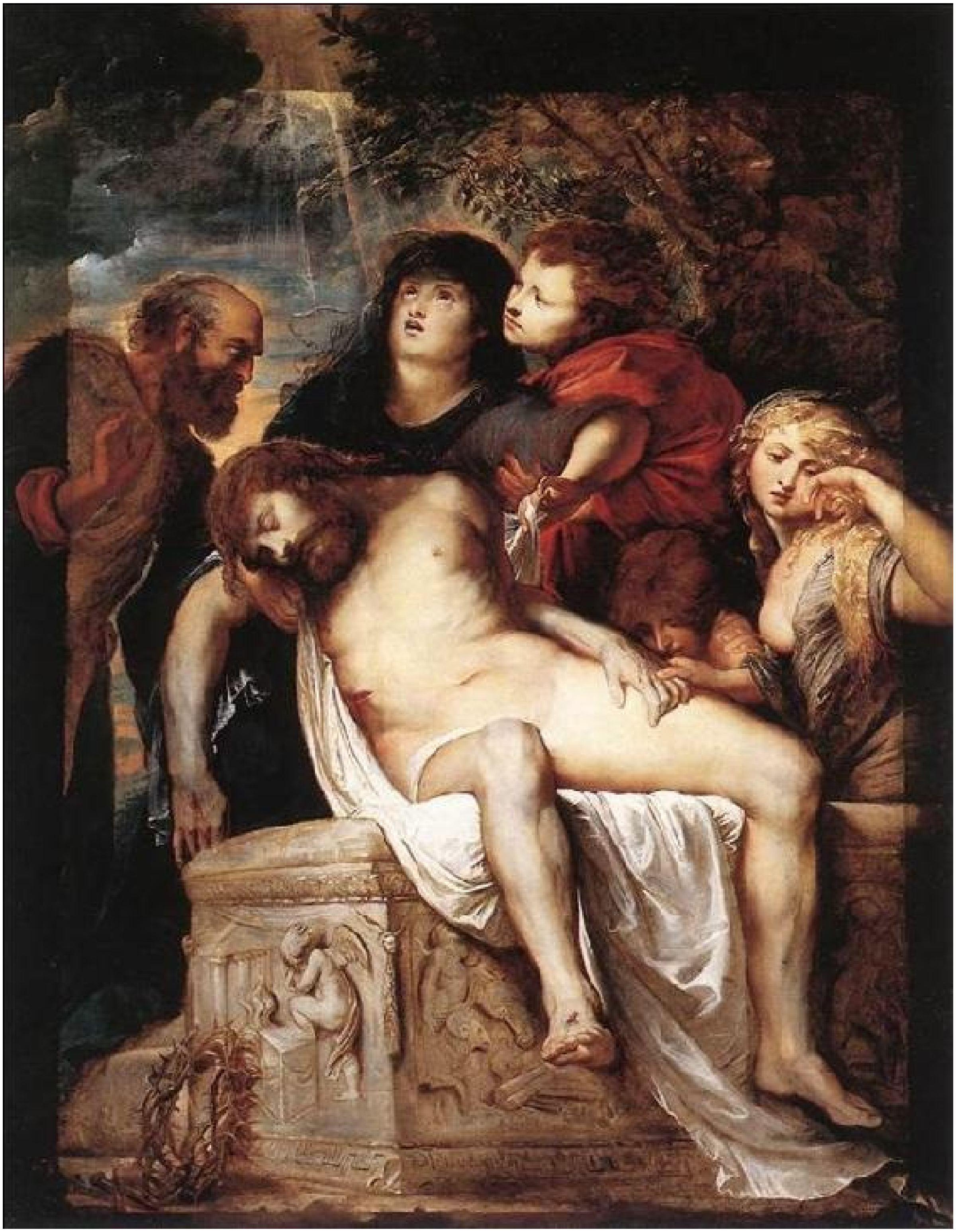
Boreas Abducting Oreithyia

c. 1615
Oil on wood, 146 x 140 cm
Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna



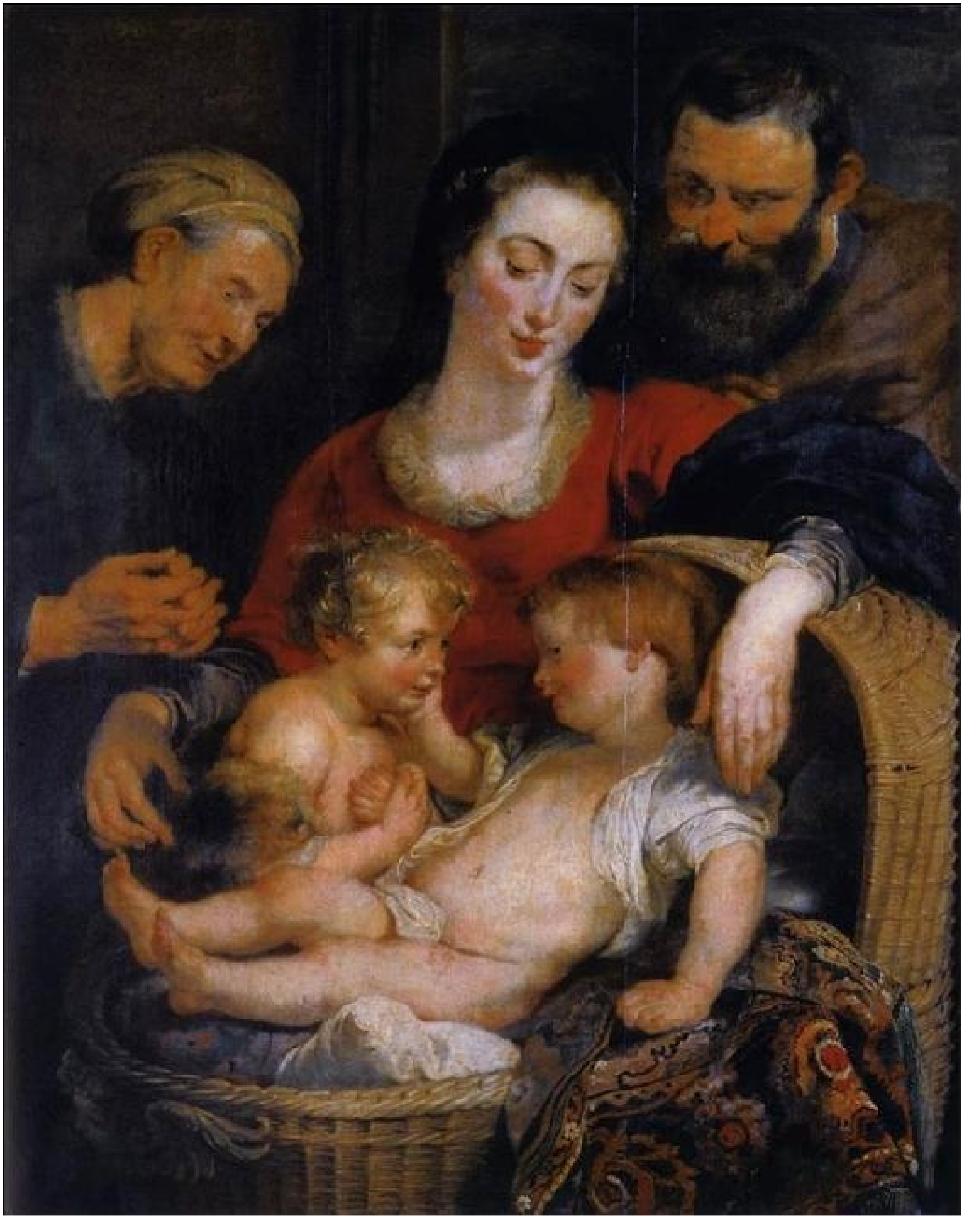
The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth

1615
114 x 80 cm



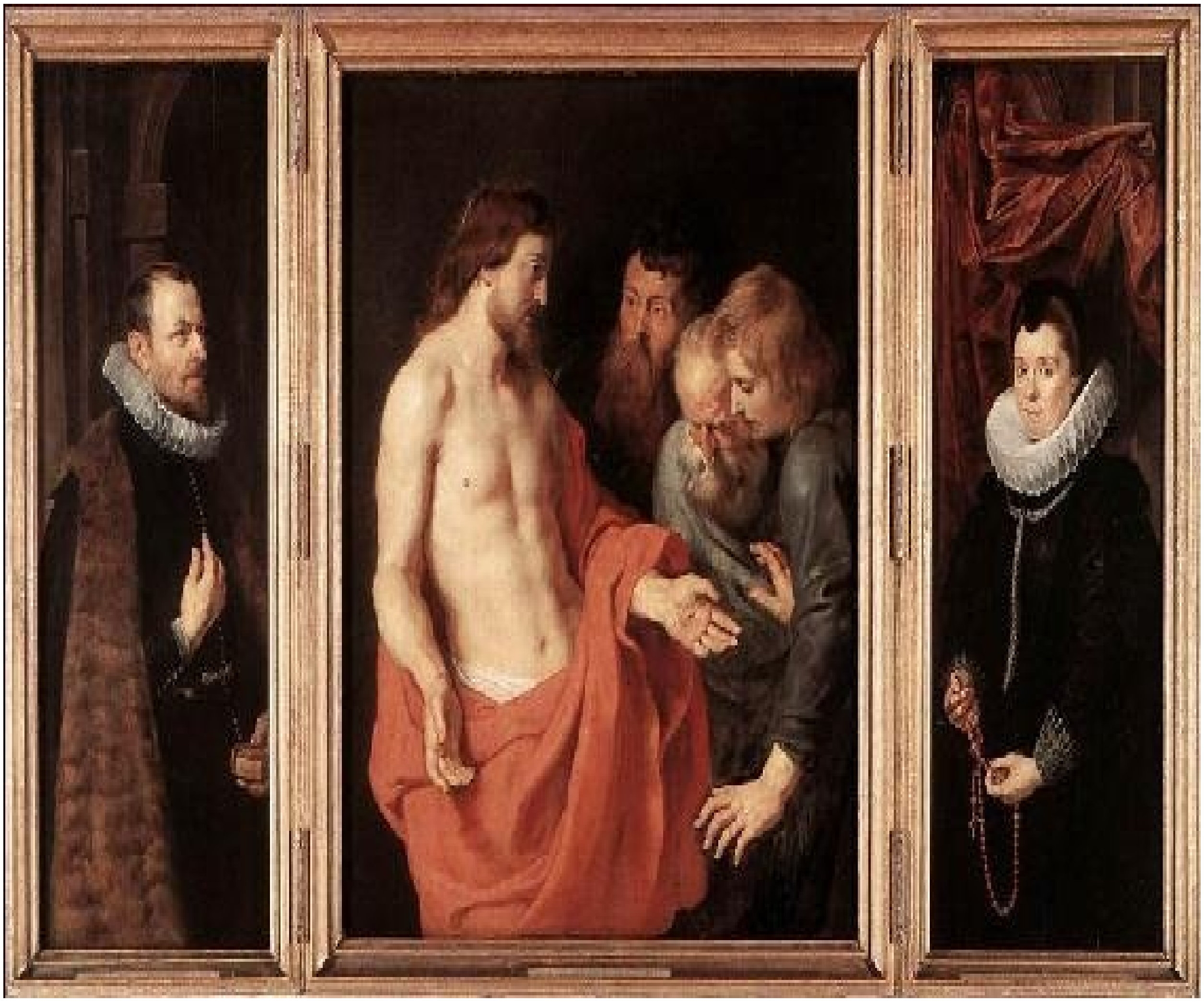
The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth

1615
114 x 80 cm
Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy



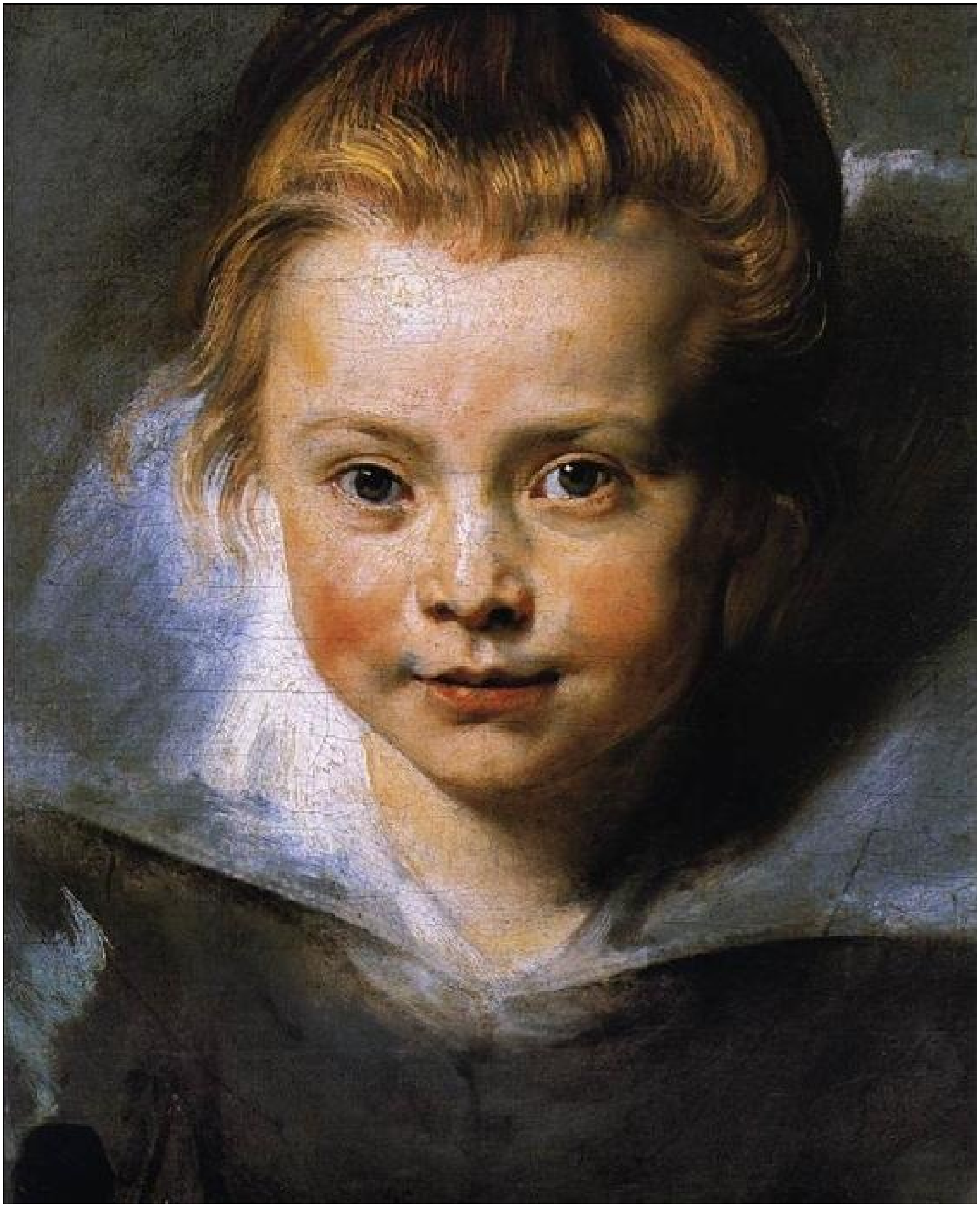
The Incredulity of St. Thomas

1615
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten



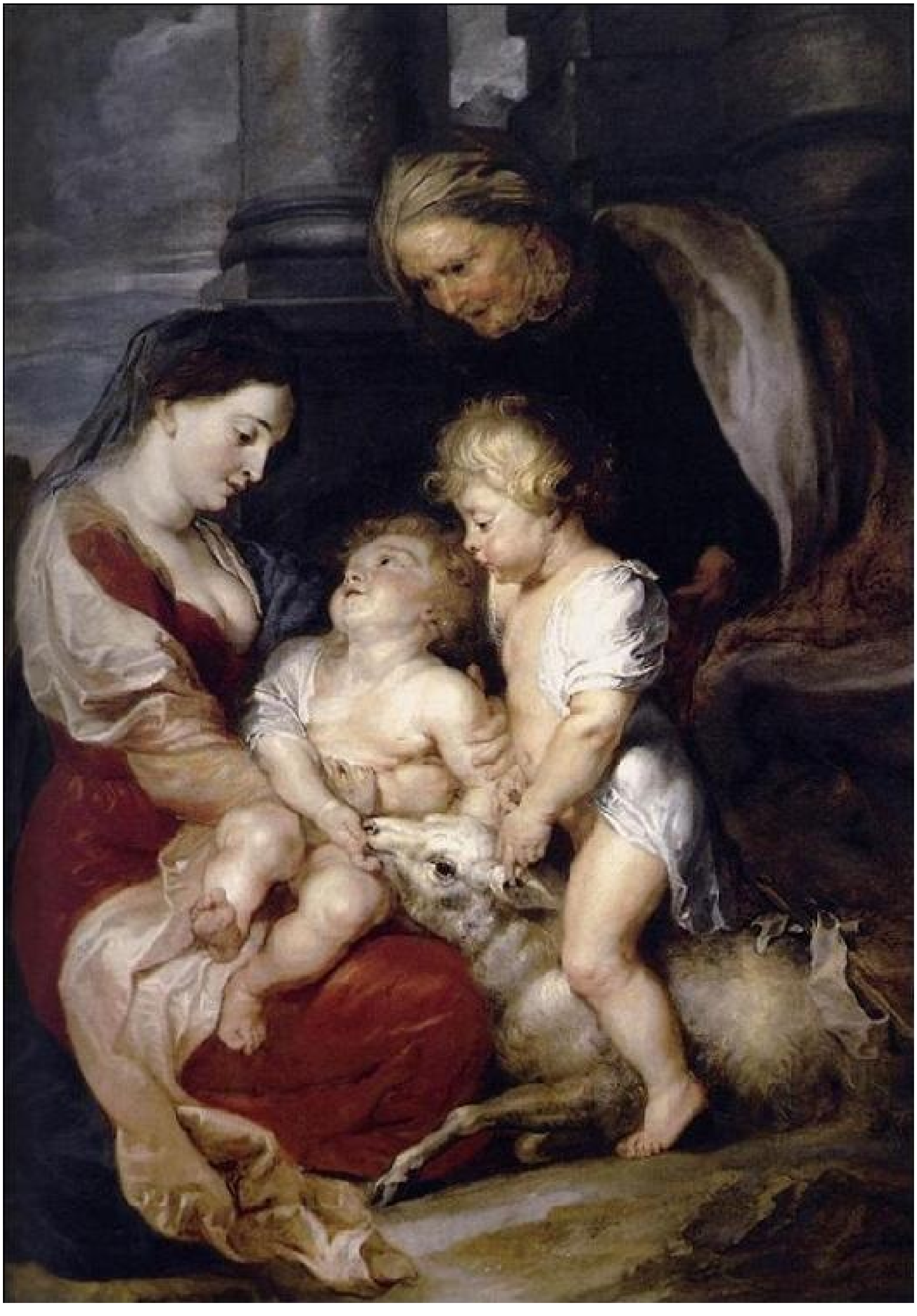
Portrait of a Young Girl

1615-16
Oil on canvas, 37 x 27 cm
Liechtenstein Museum, Vienna



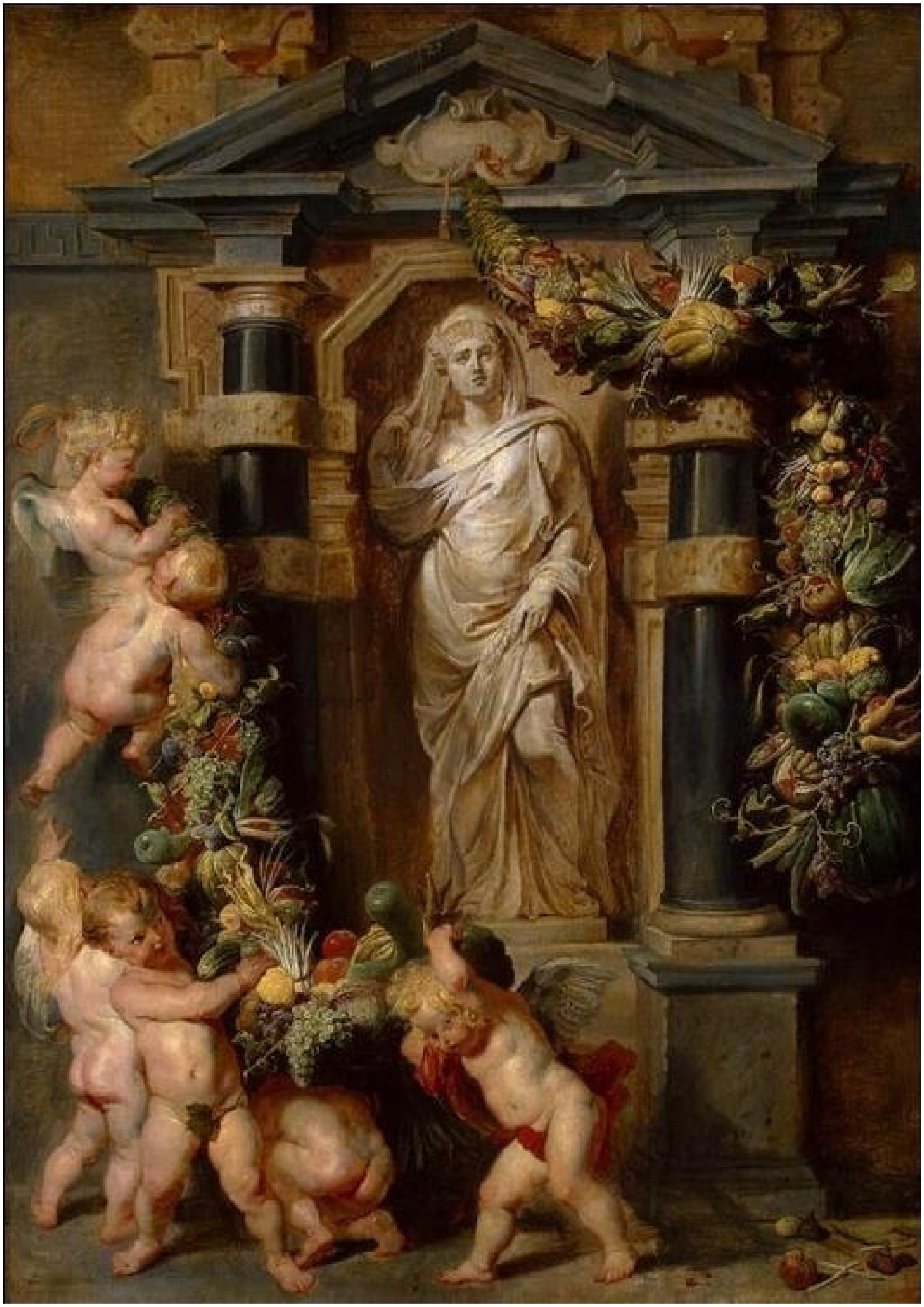
The Virgin and Child with St. Elizabeth and the Infant St. John the Baptist

c.1615
151 x 113 cm
Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Paseo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



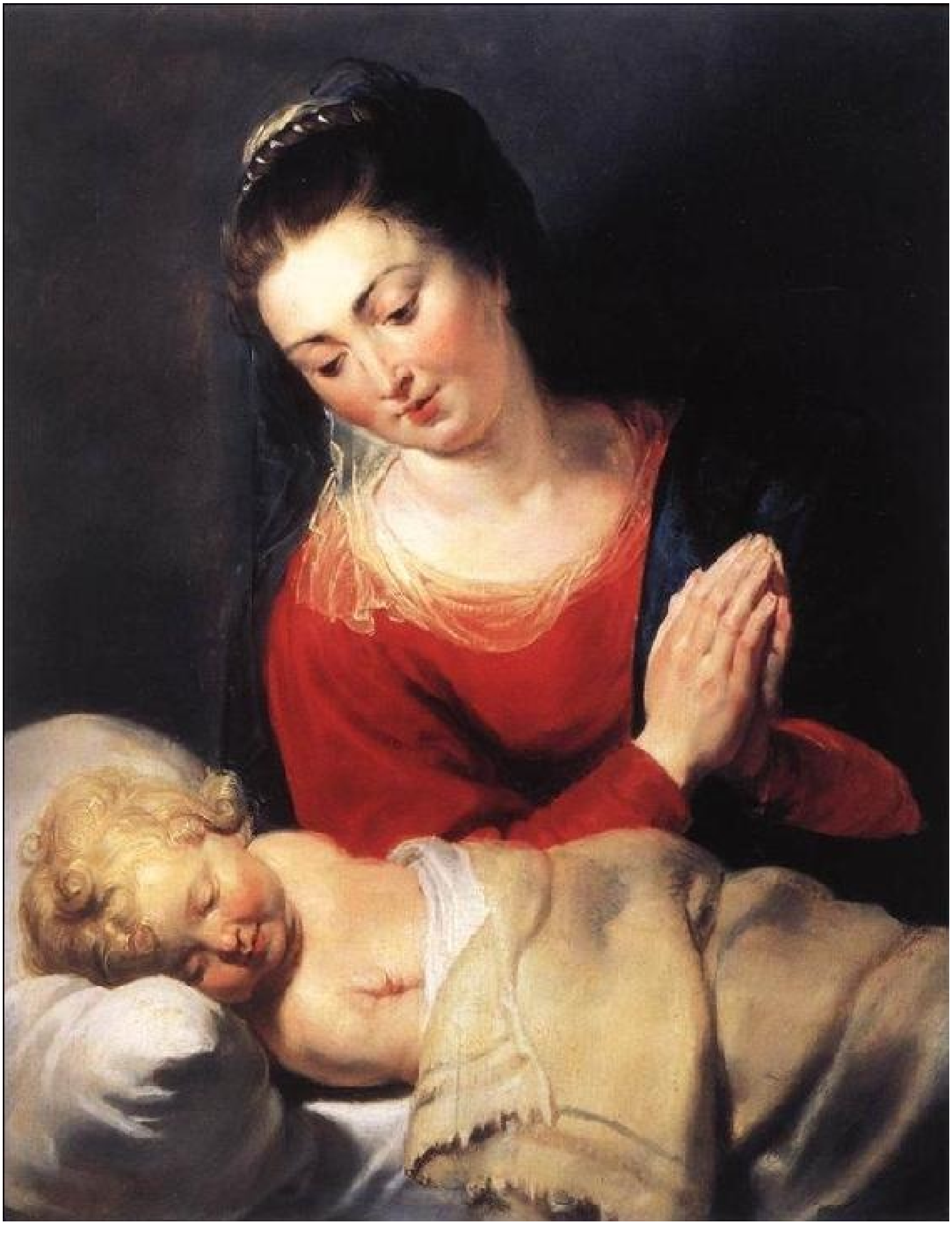
The Statue of Ceres

c. 1615
Oil on wood, 91 x 66 cm
The Hermitage, St. Petersburg



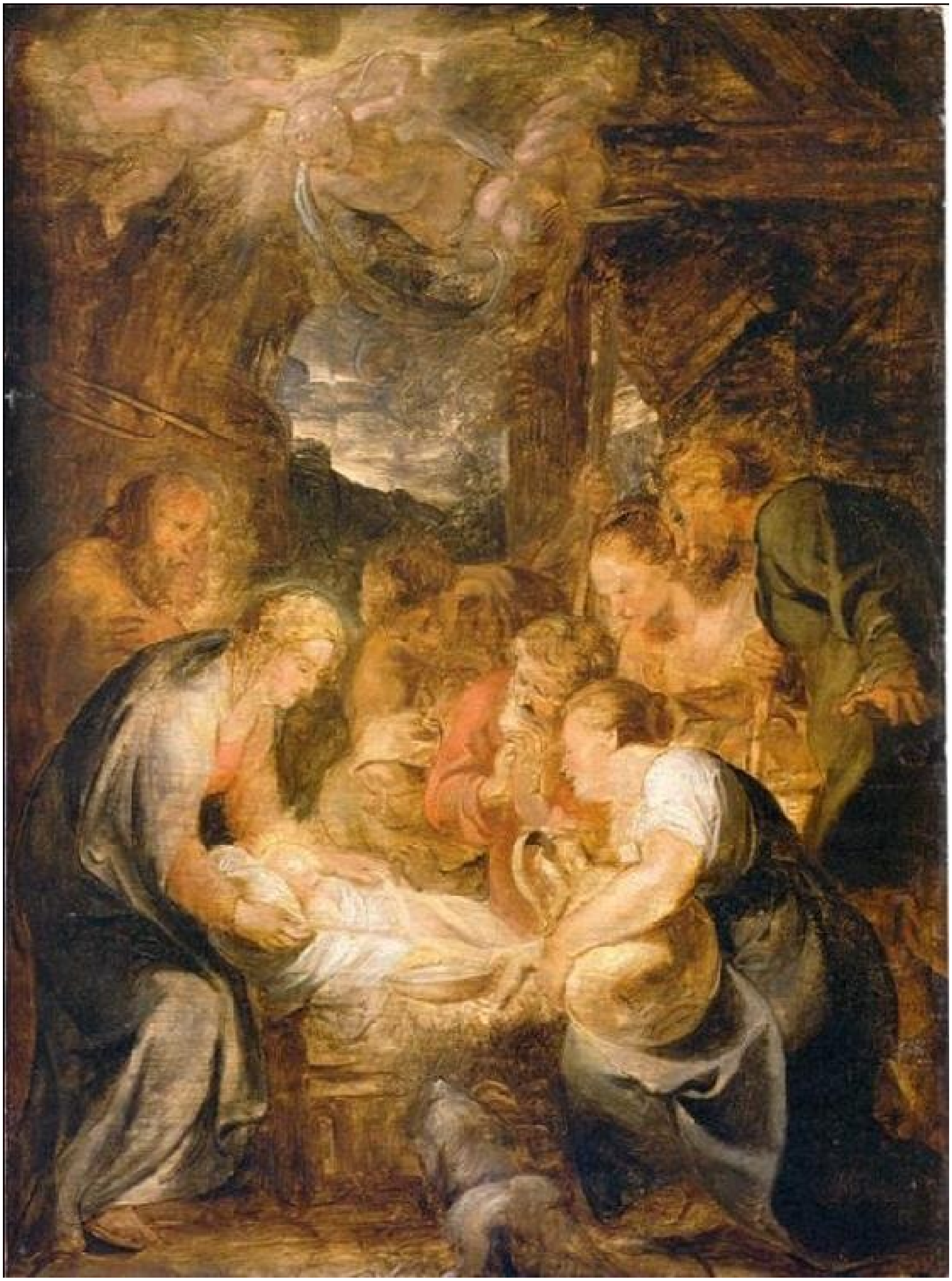
Virgin in Adoration before the Christ Child

c.1615



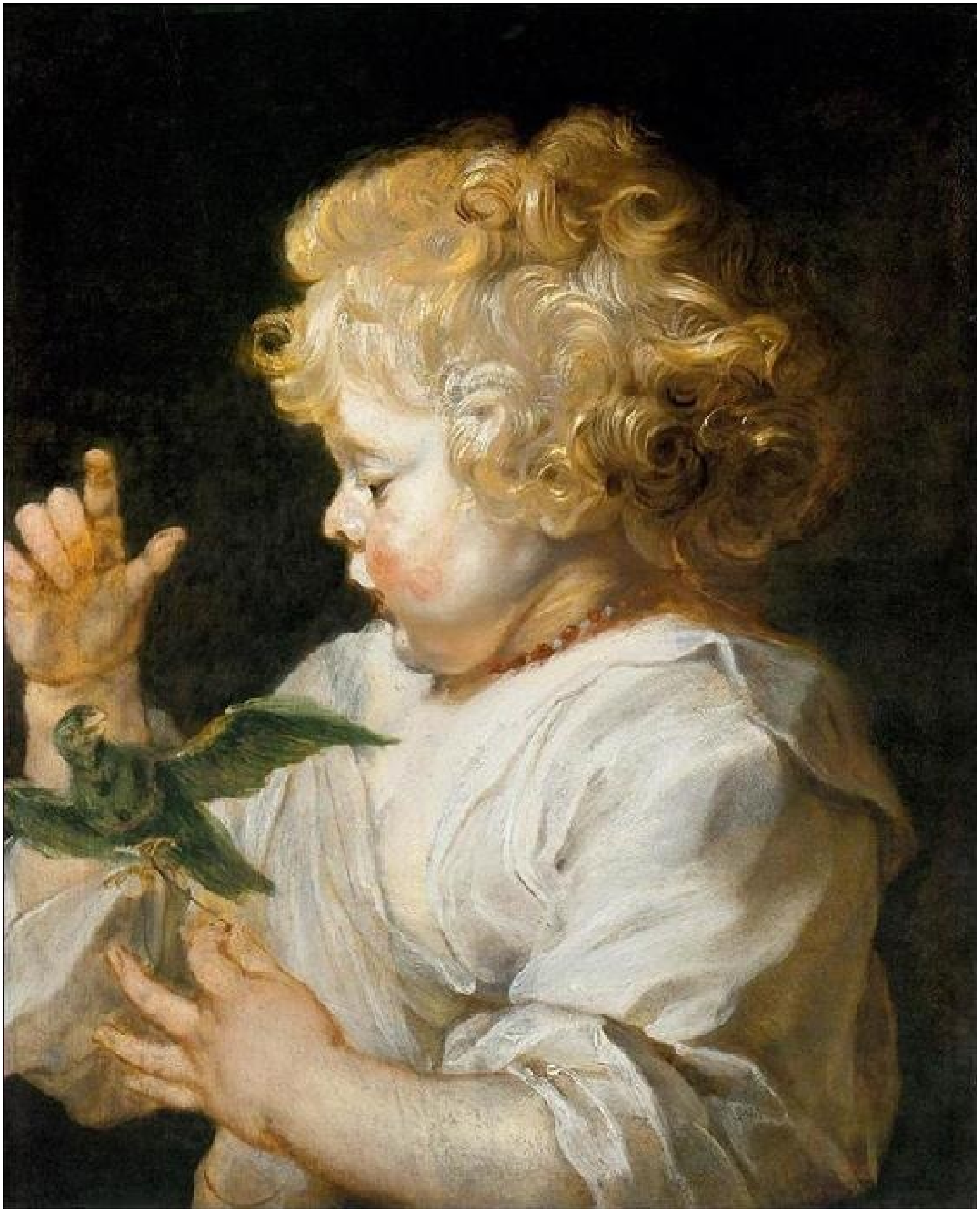
Adoration of the Shepherds

1616
46 x 34 cm



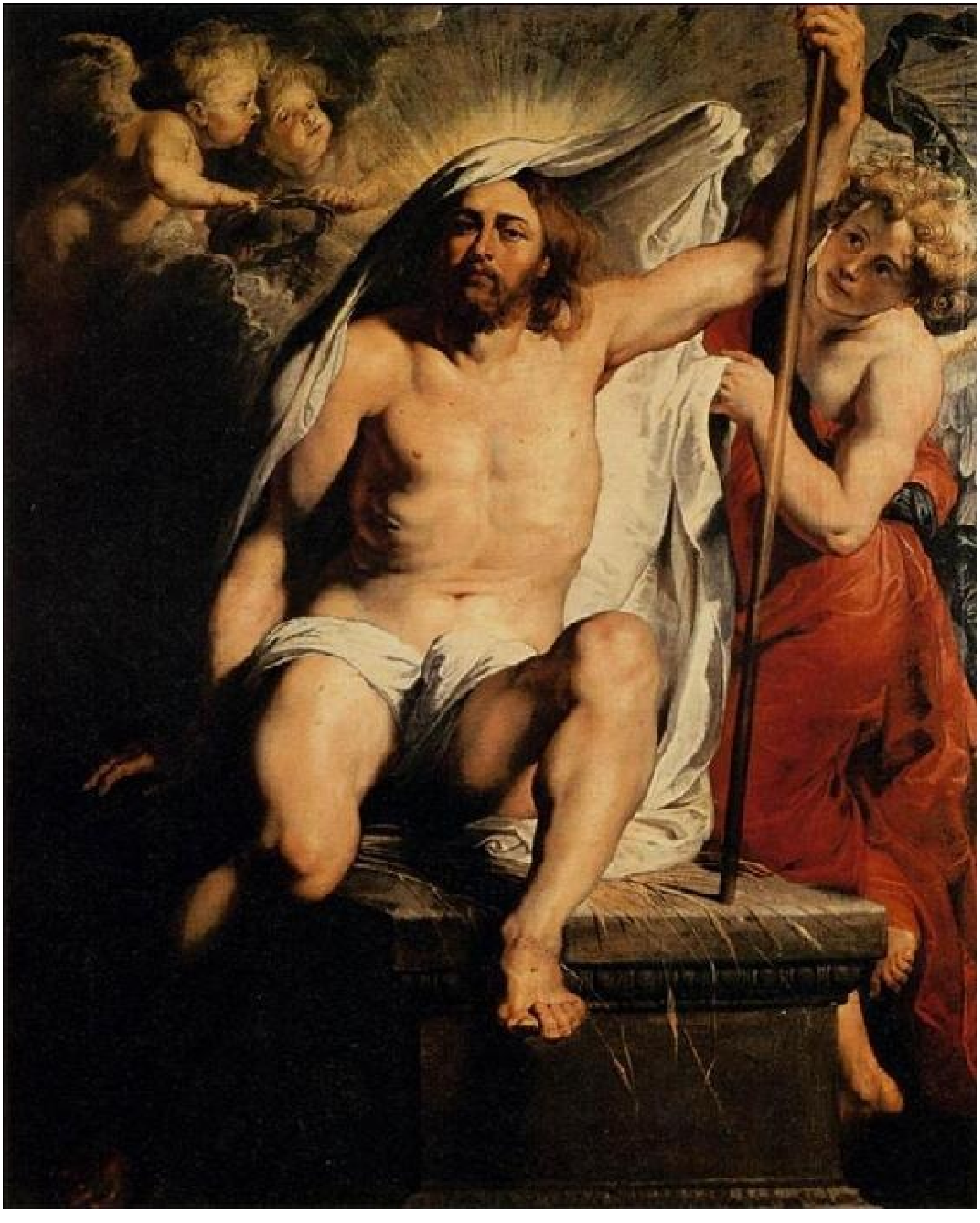
Boy with Bird

c.1616
49 x 40 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany



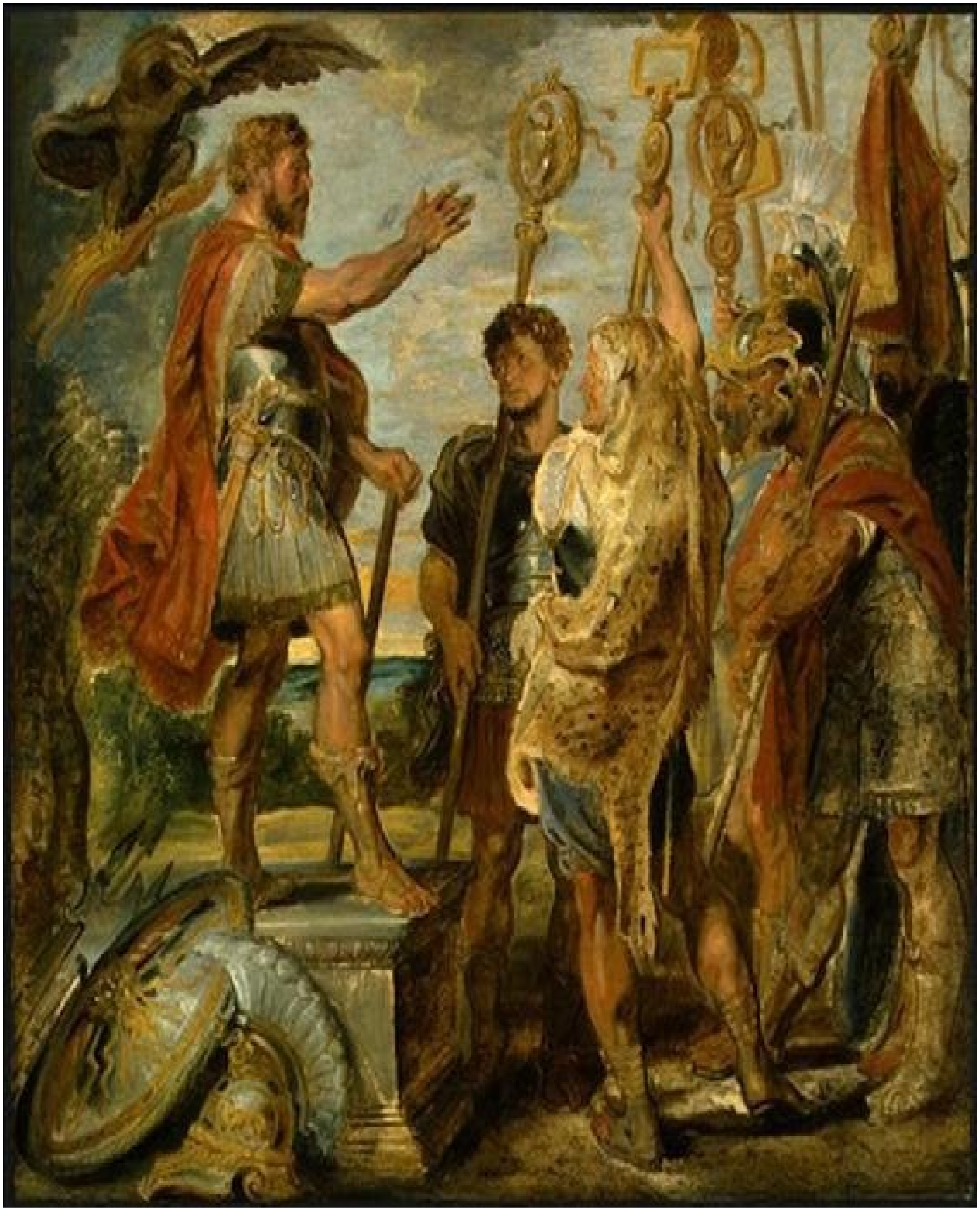
Christ Resurrected

c.1616
183 x 155 cm
Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy



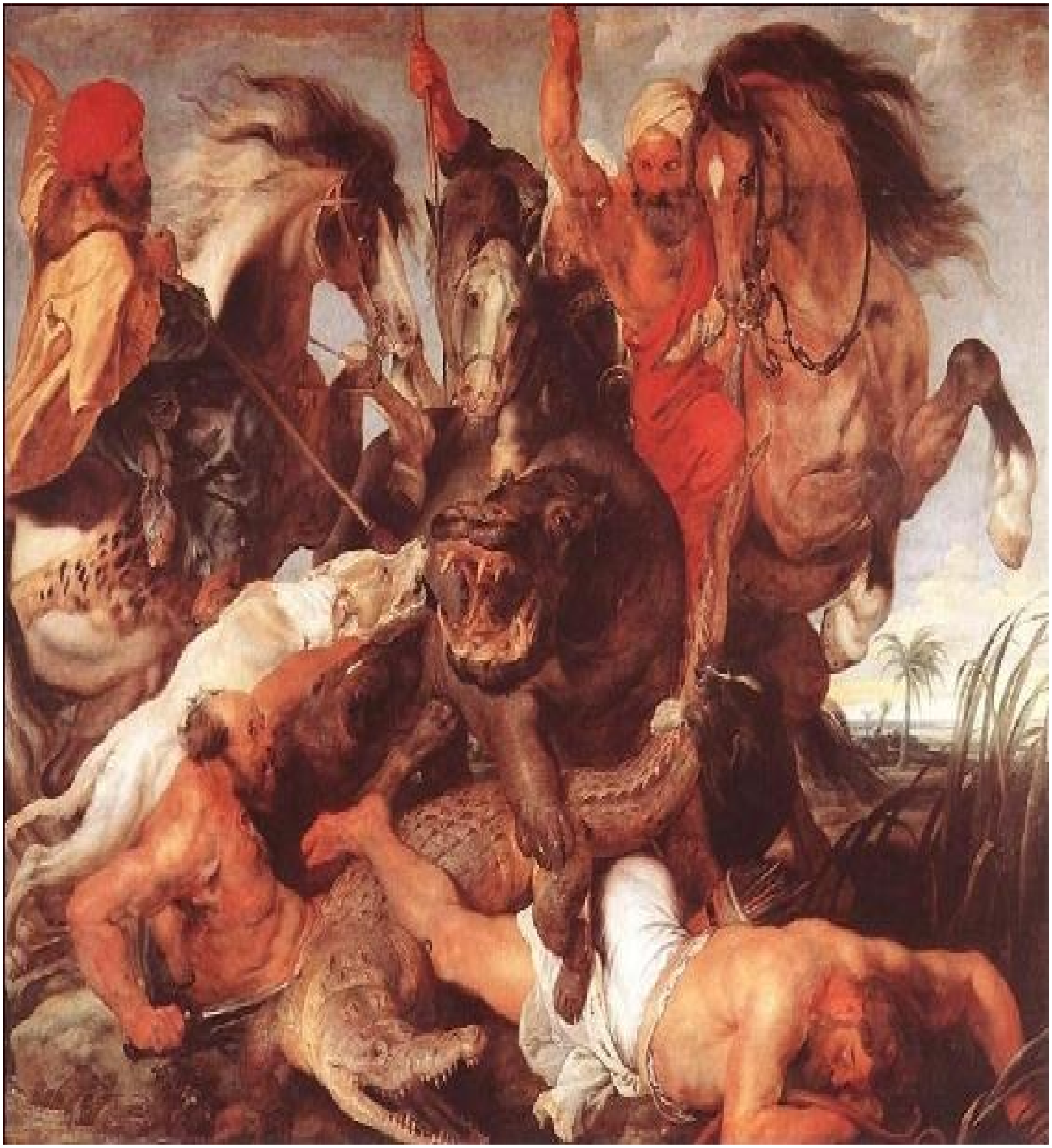
Decius Mus Addressing the Legions

c.1616
81 x 85 cm



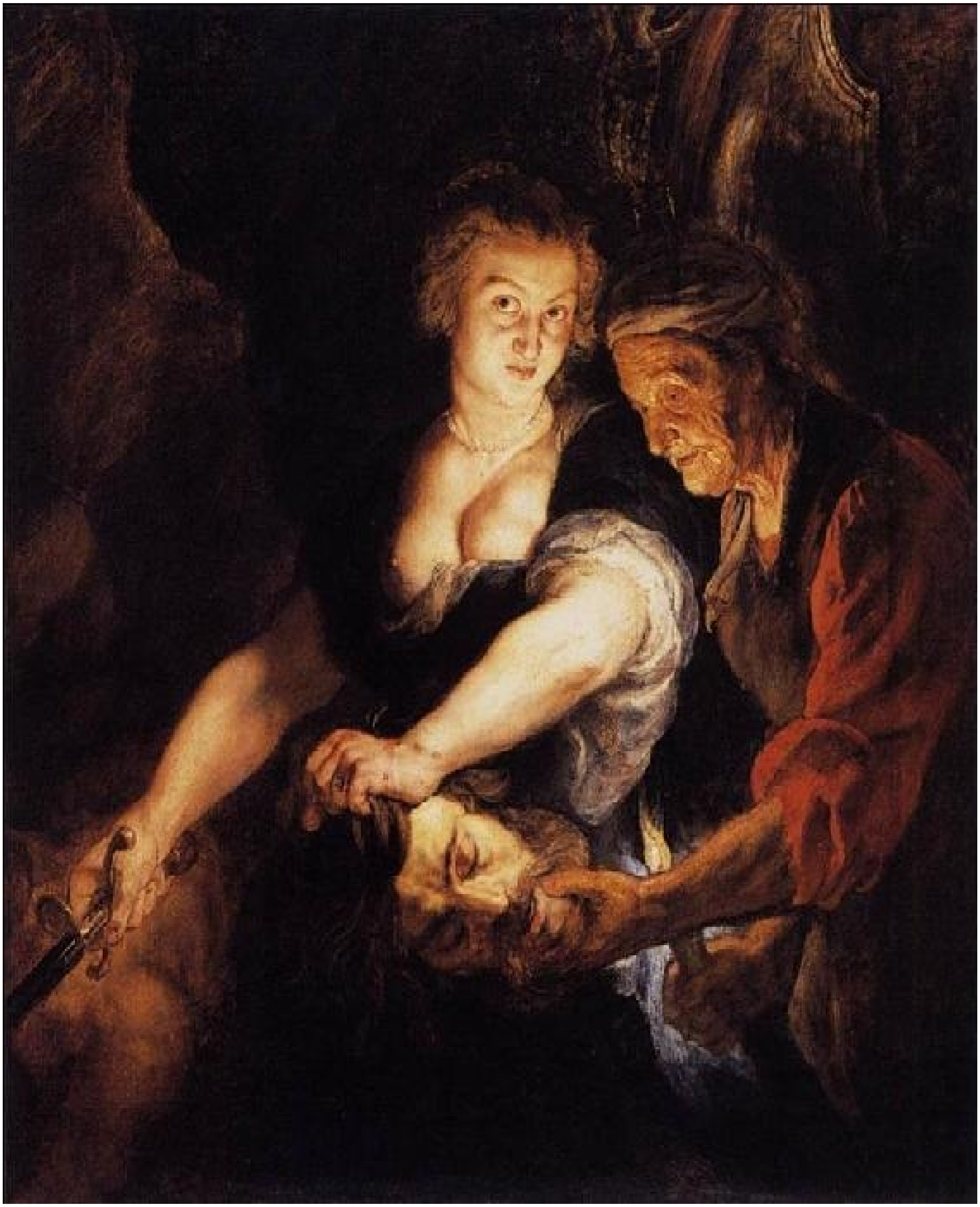
Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt

c.1616
248 x 321 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



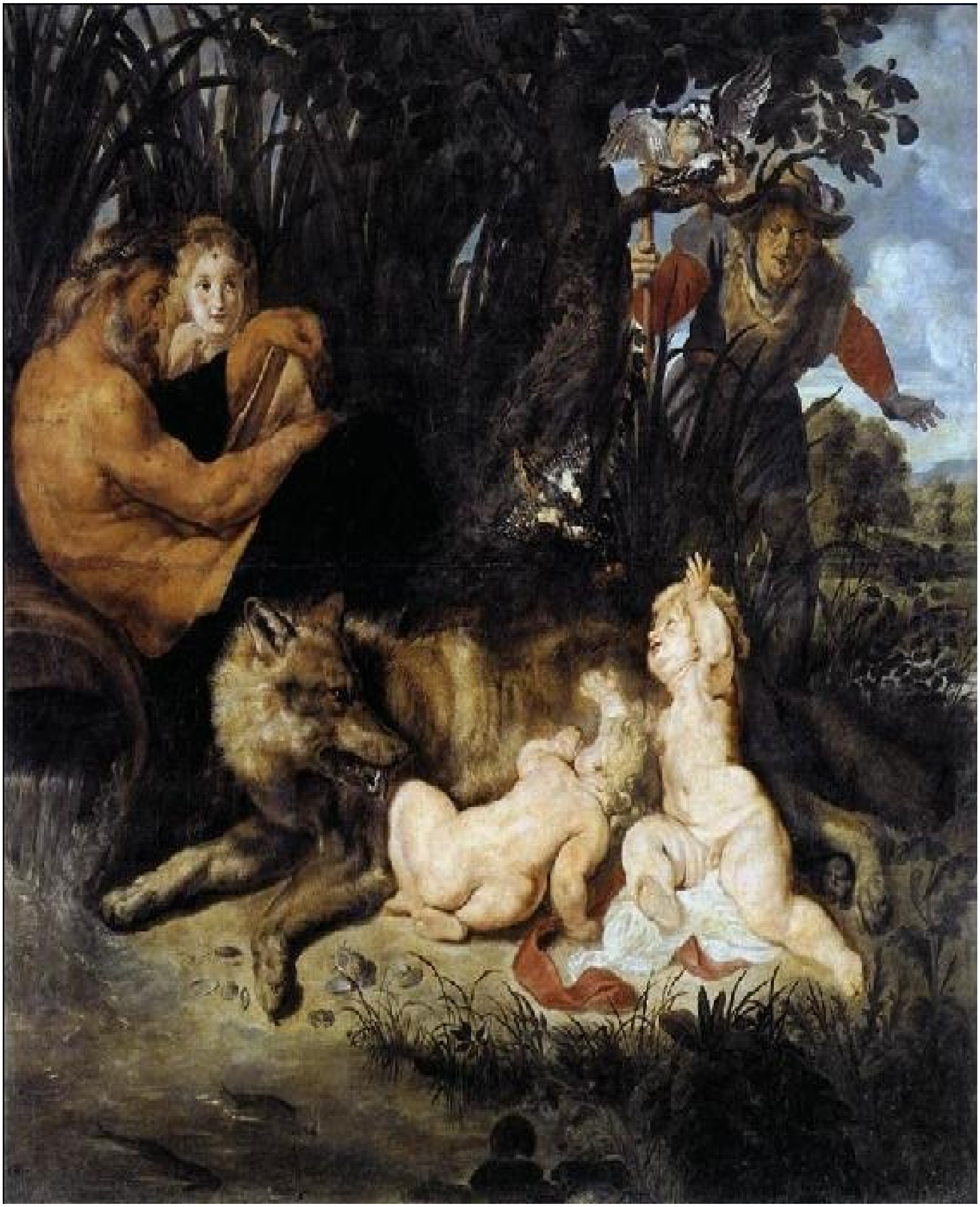
Judith with the Head of Holofernes

c.1616
120 x 111 cm
Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany



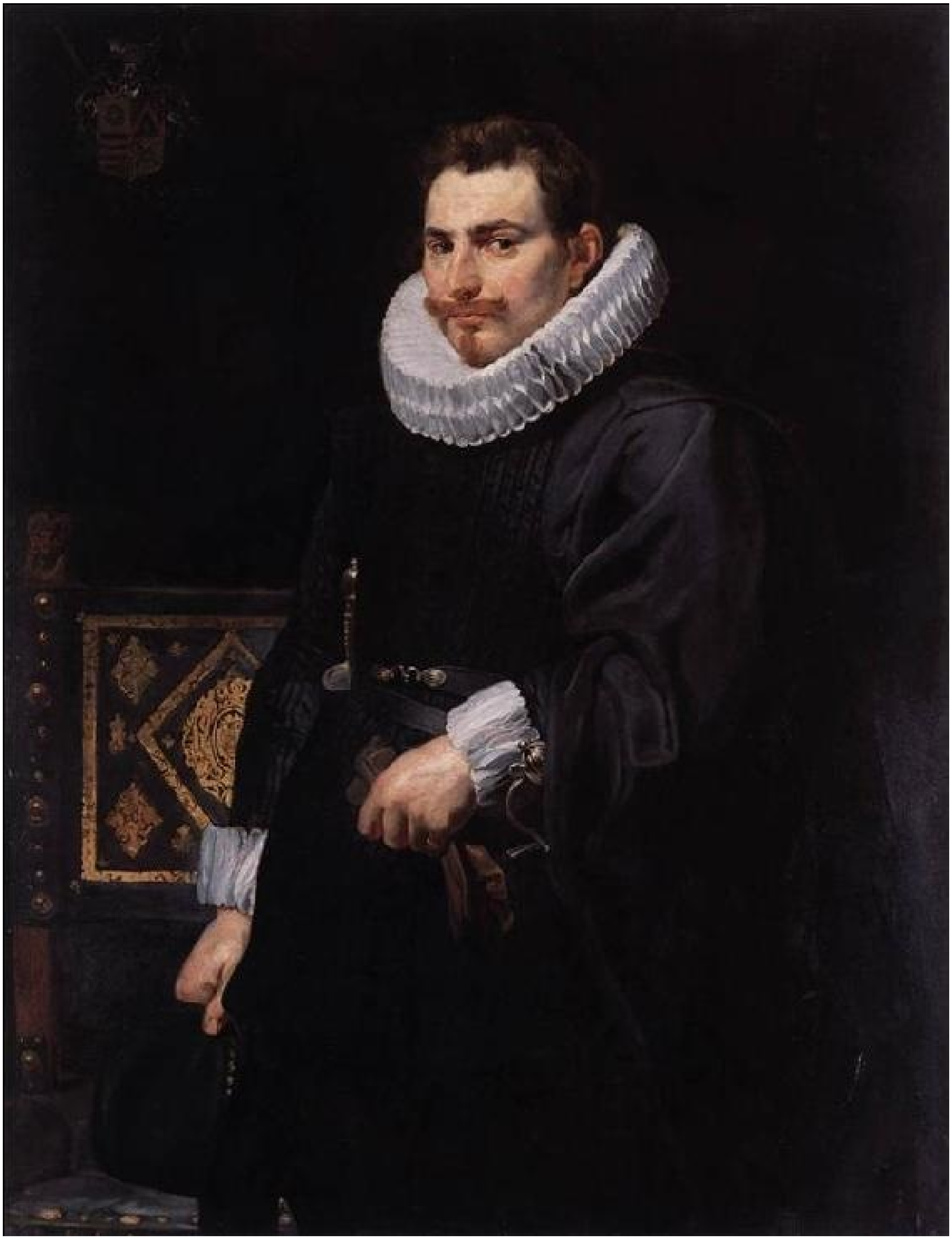
Romulus and Remus

1616
210 x 212 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



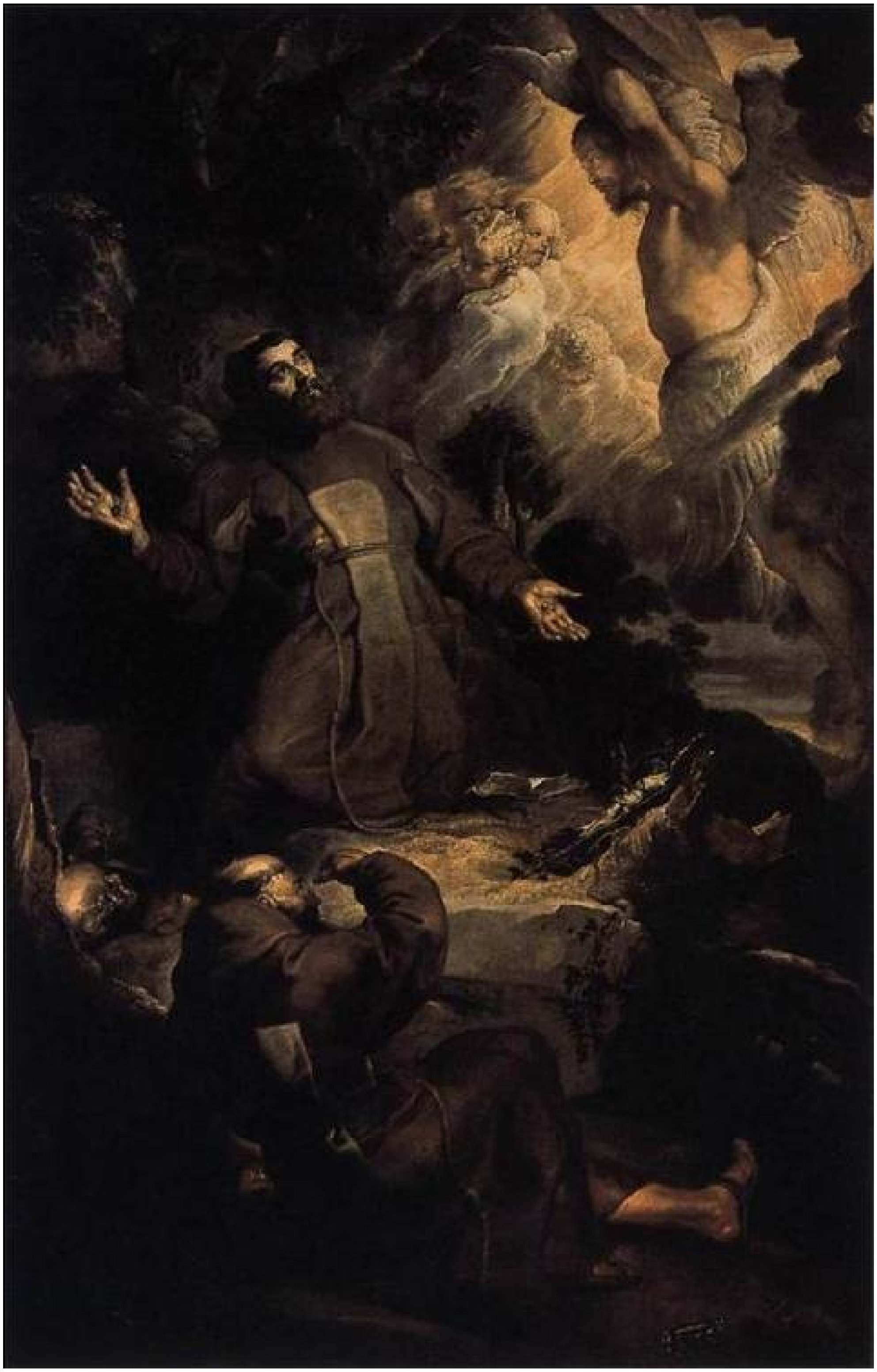
Portrait of Jan Vermoelen

1616
Oil on panel, 126 x 96 cm
Liechtenstein Museum, Vienna



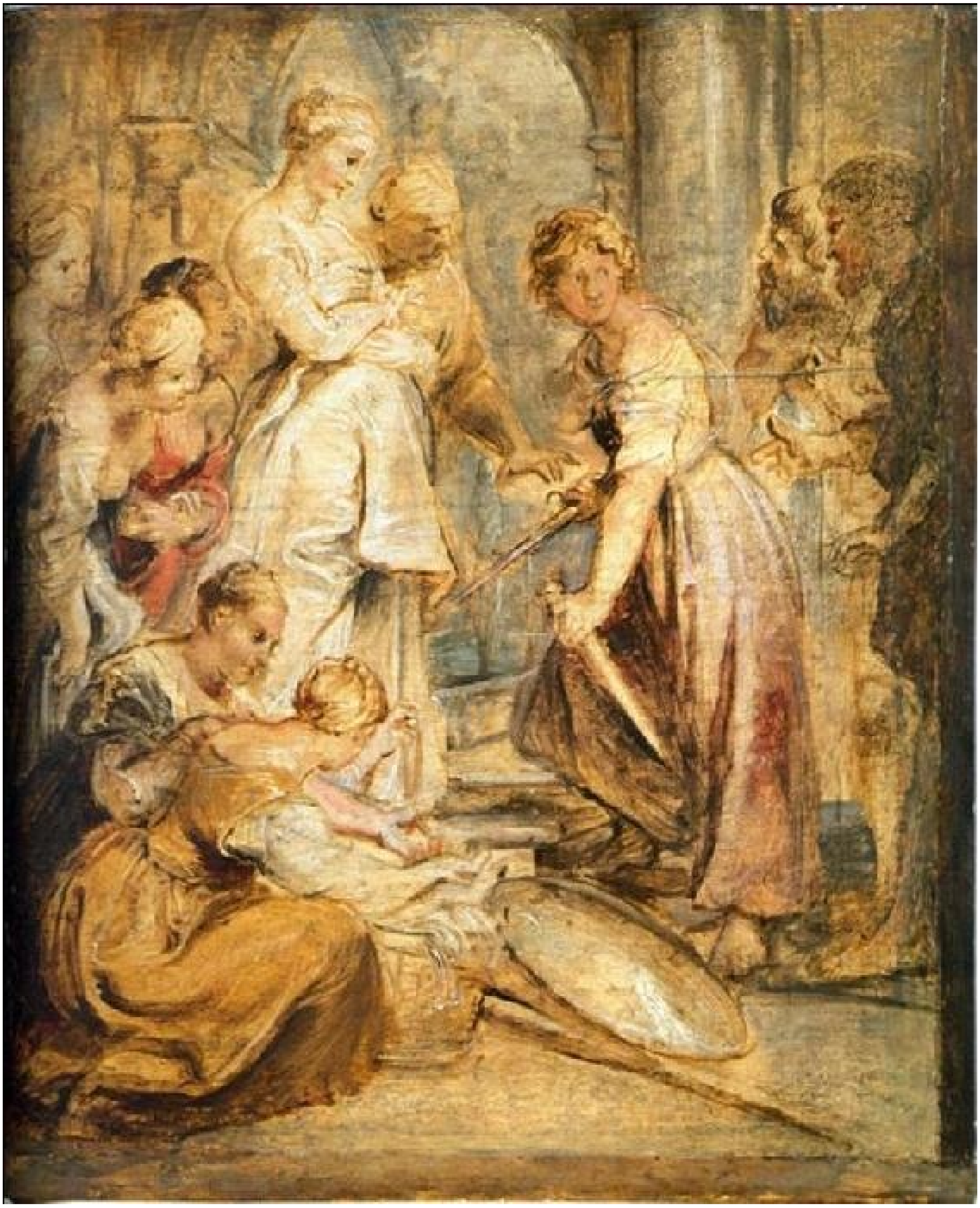
The Stigmatization of St. Francis

c.1616
382 x 243 cm
Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, Germany



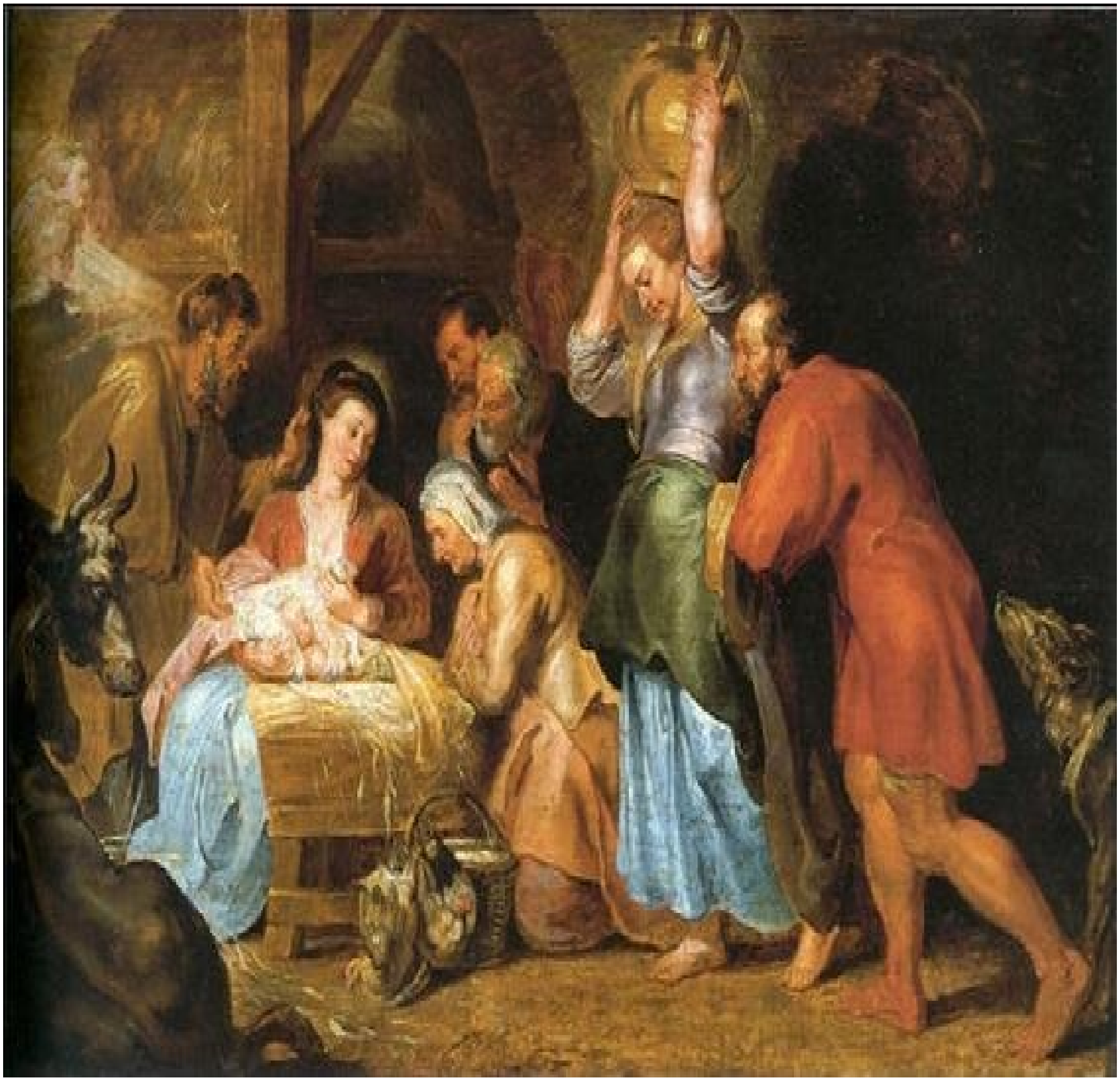
Achilles and the Daughters of Lykomedes

c.1617
28 x 26 cm



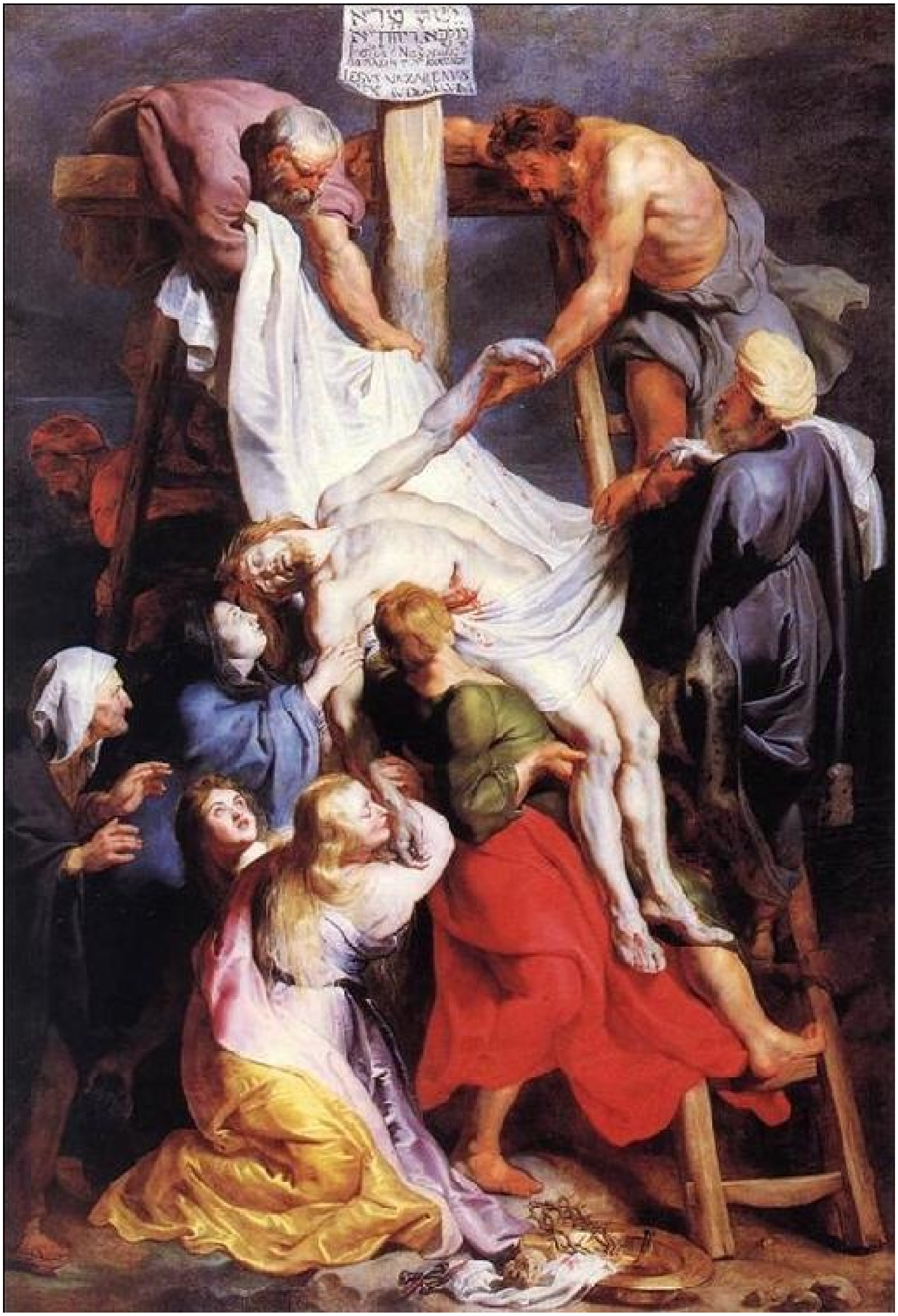
Adoration of the Shepherds

c.1617
68 x 100 cm



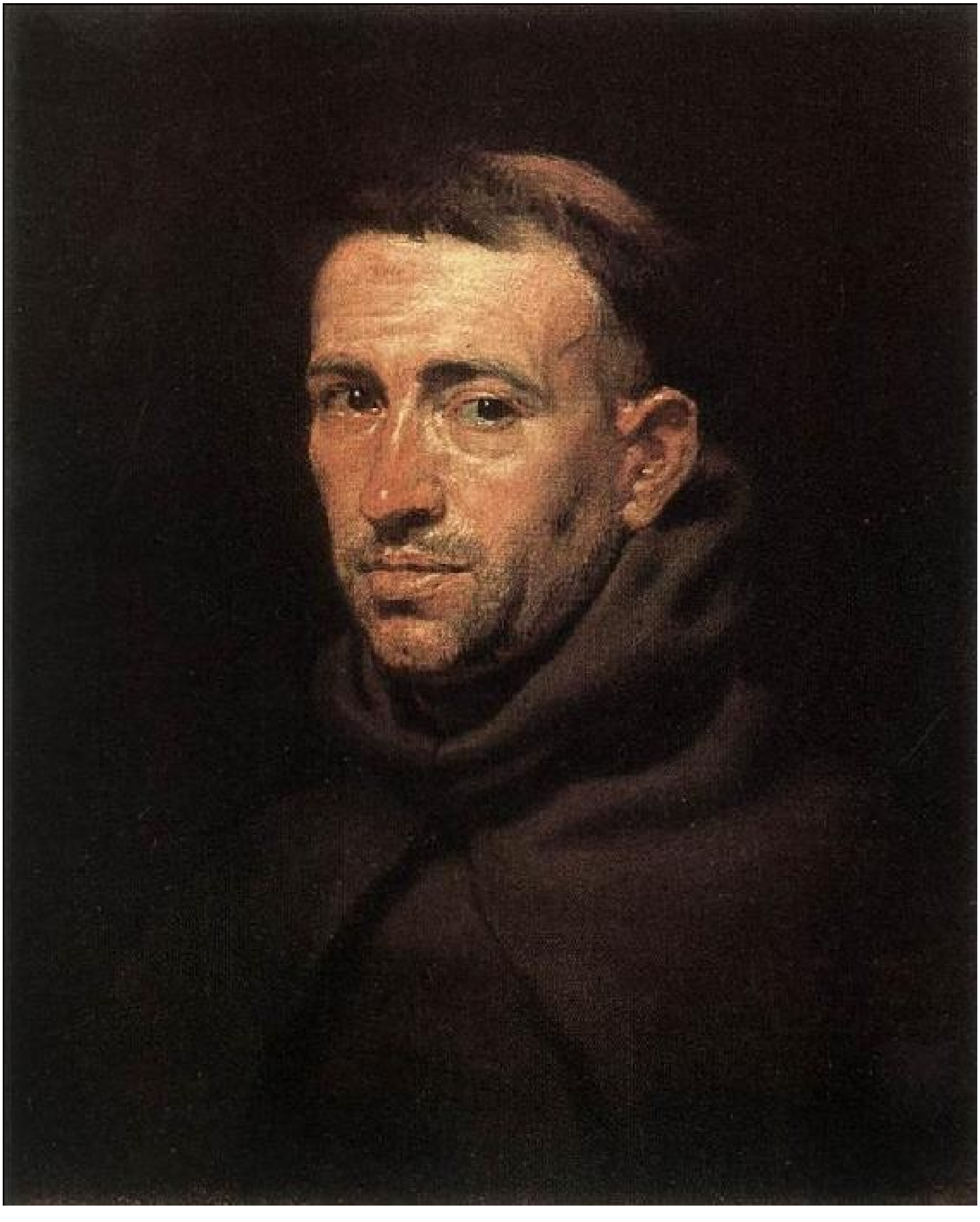
Descent from the Cross

1617
425 x 295 cm
Musee des Beaux-Arts, Lille, France



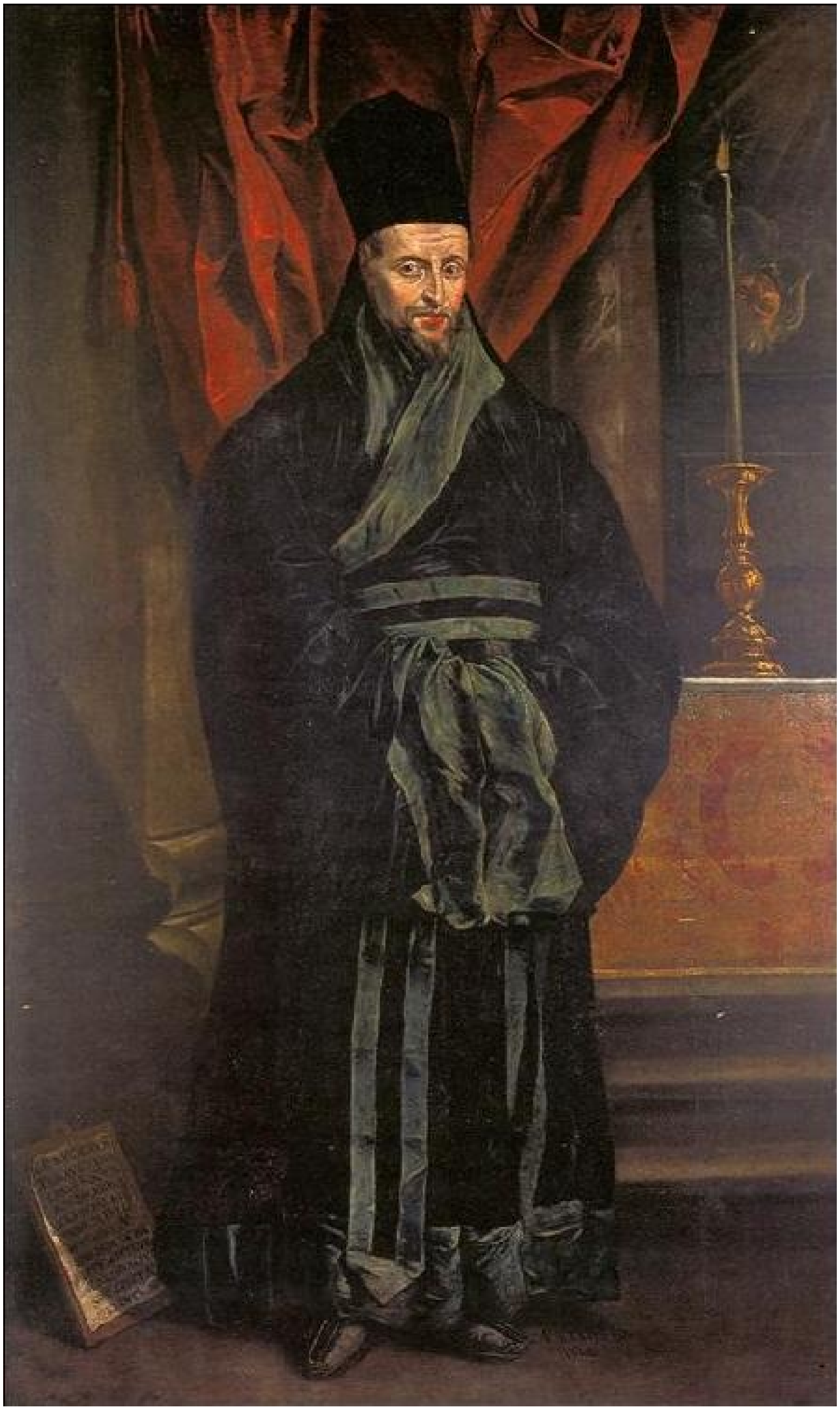
Head of a Franciscan Friar

1617
52 x 44 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



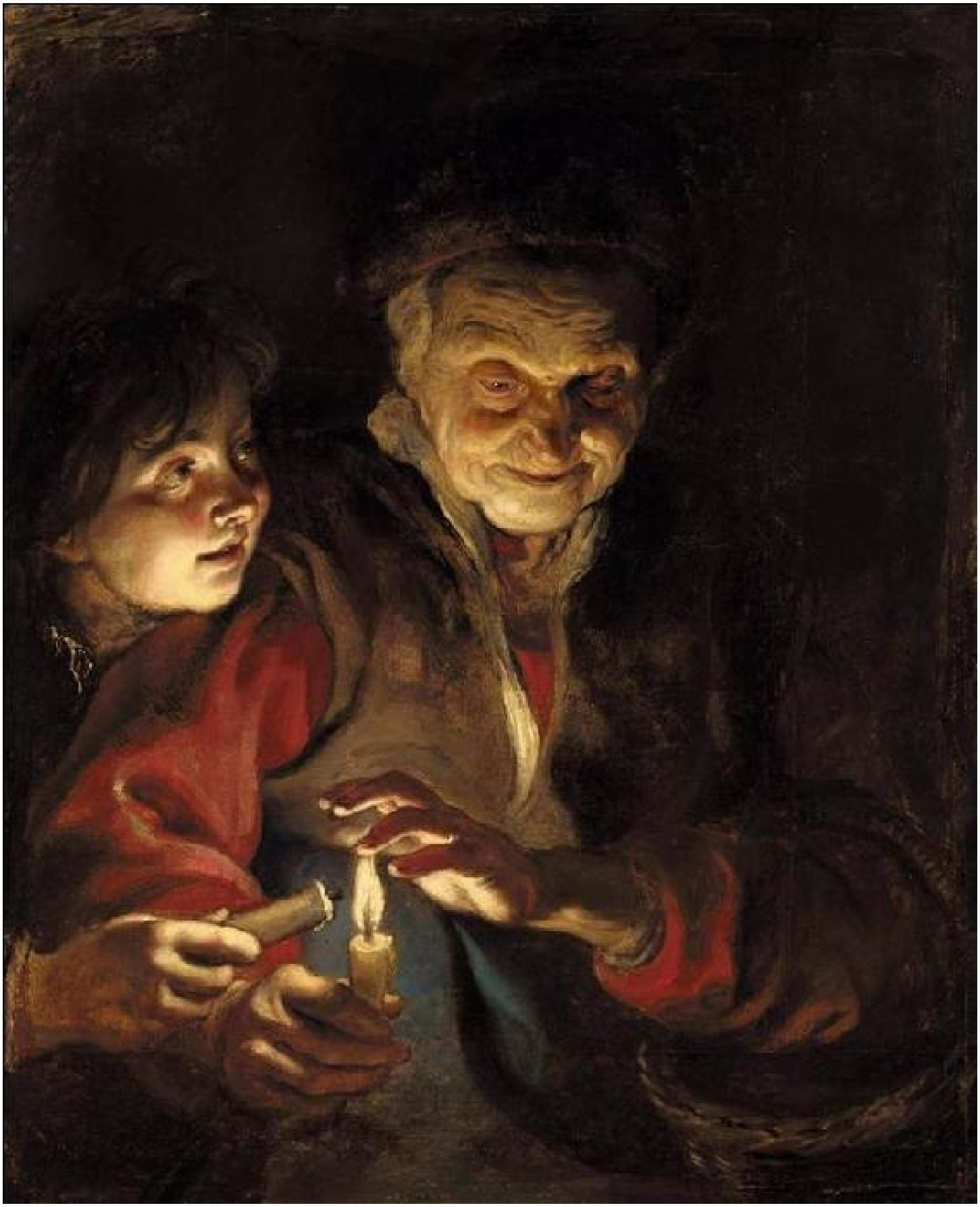
Nicolas Trigault

1617
220 x 136 cm



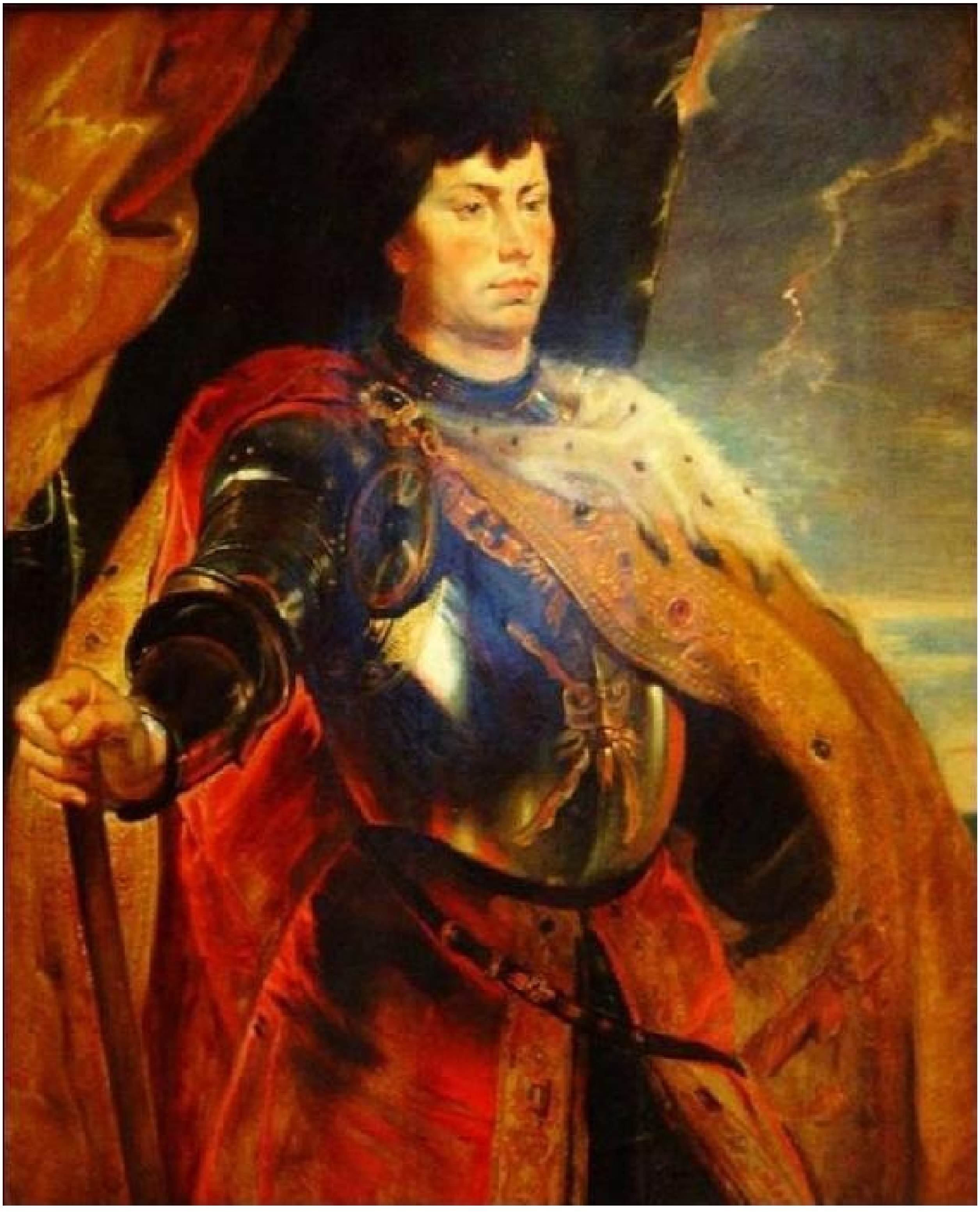
Night Scene

1617
79 x 64 cm
Private Collection



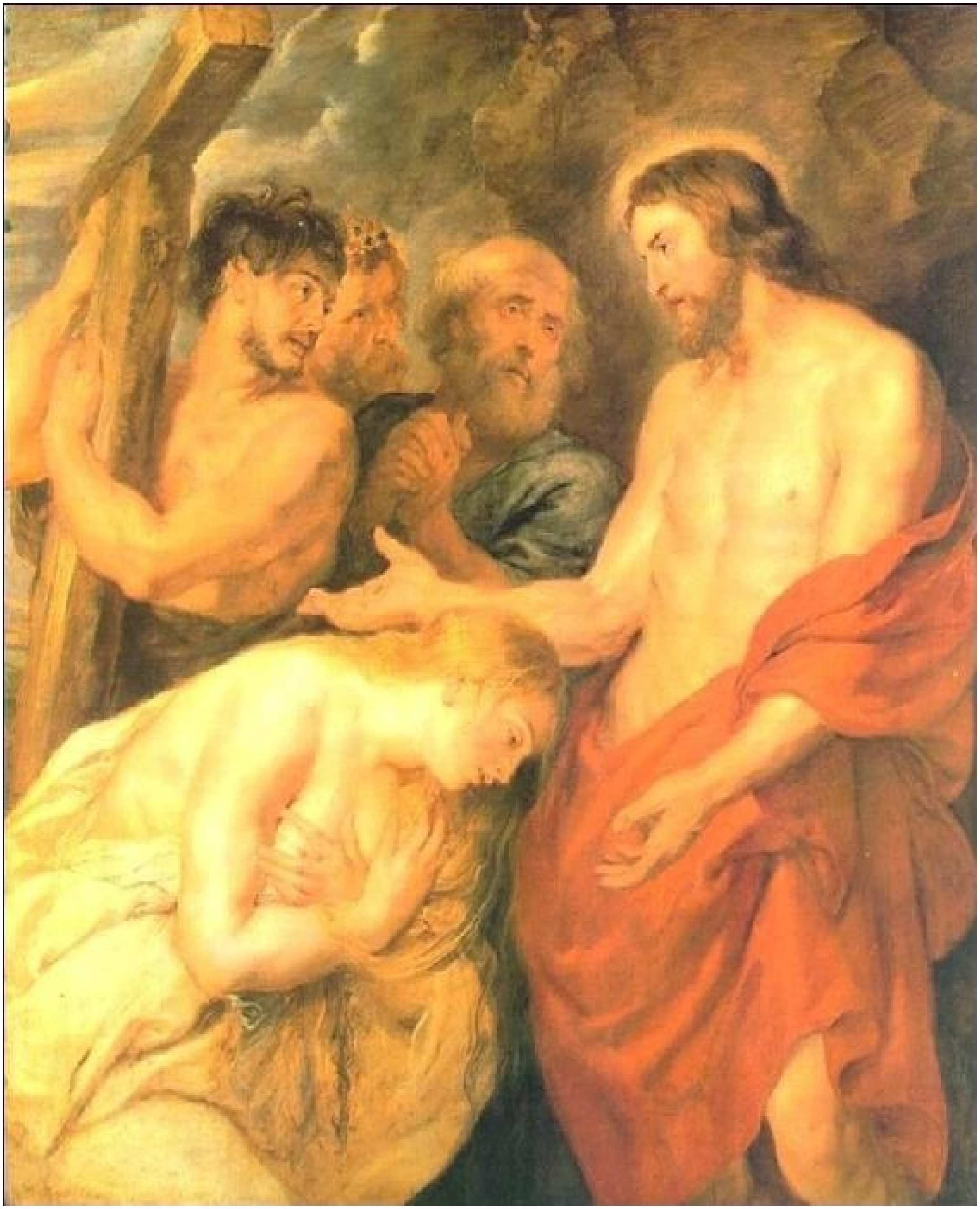
Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy

c.1618



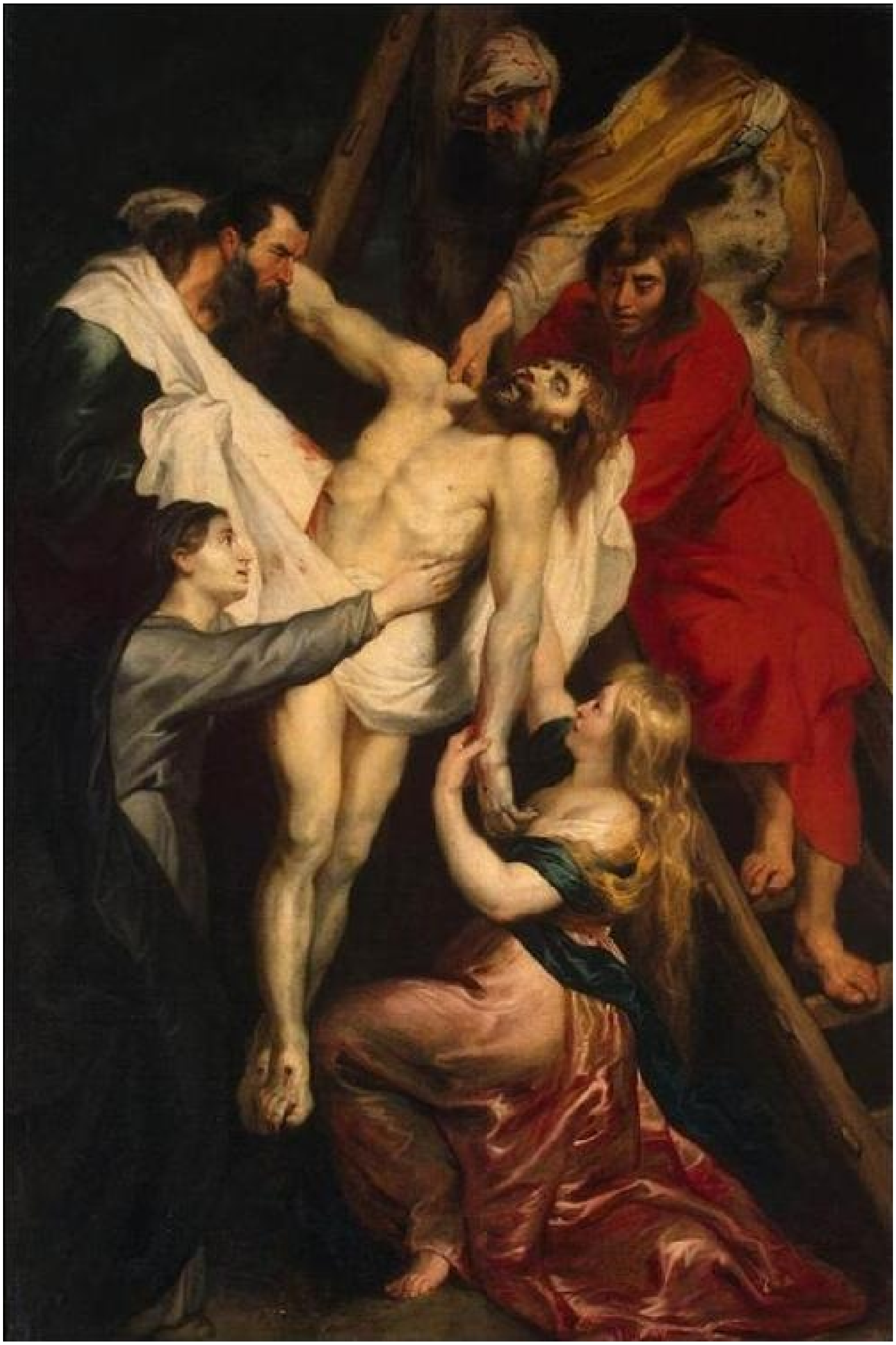
Christ and Mary Magdalene

1618
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



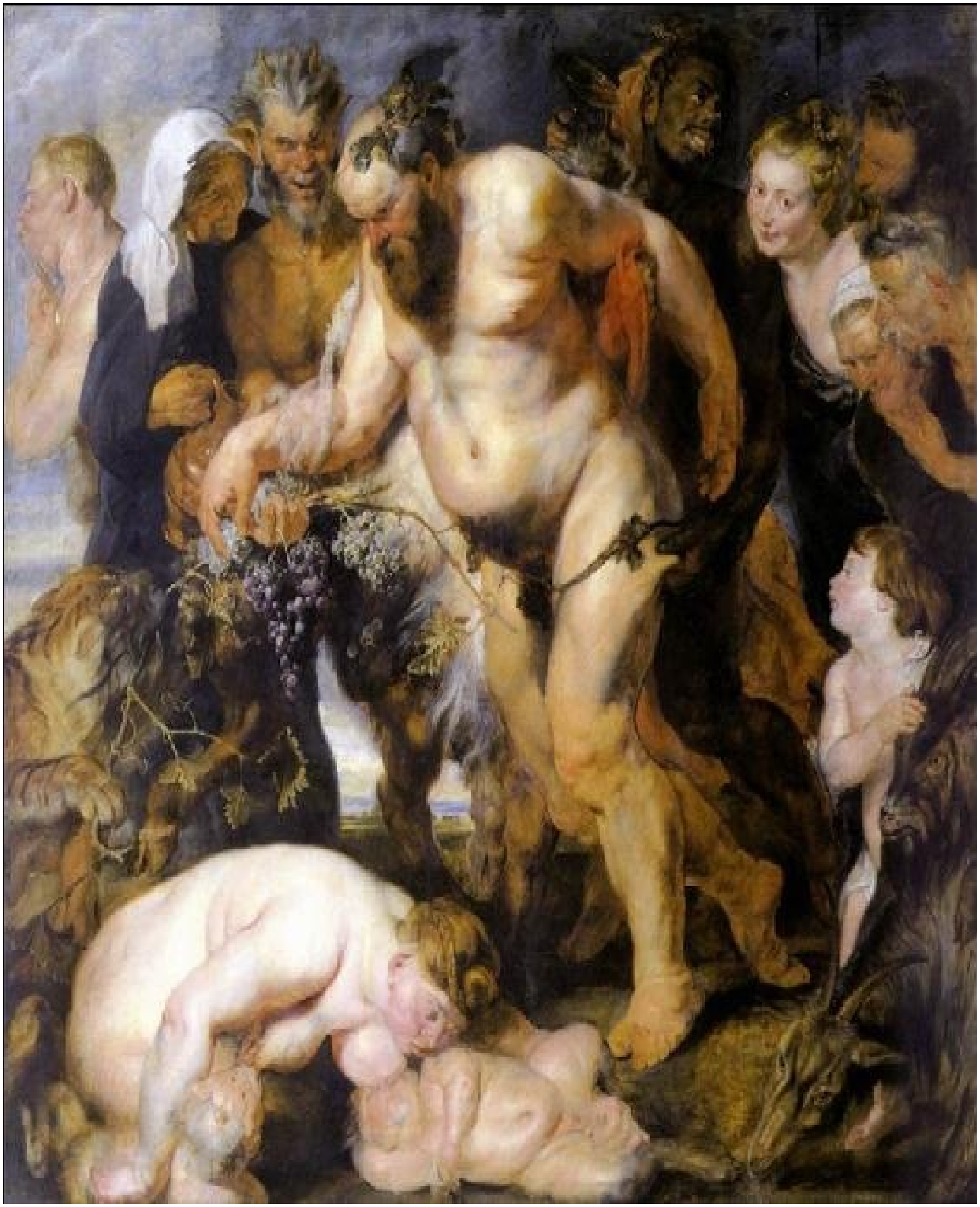
Descent from the Cross

1618
297 x 200 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



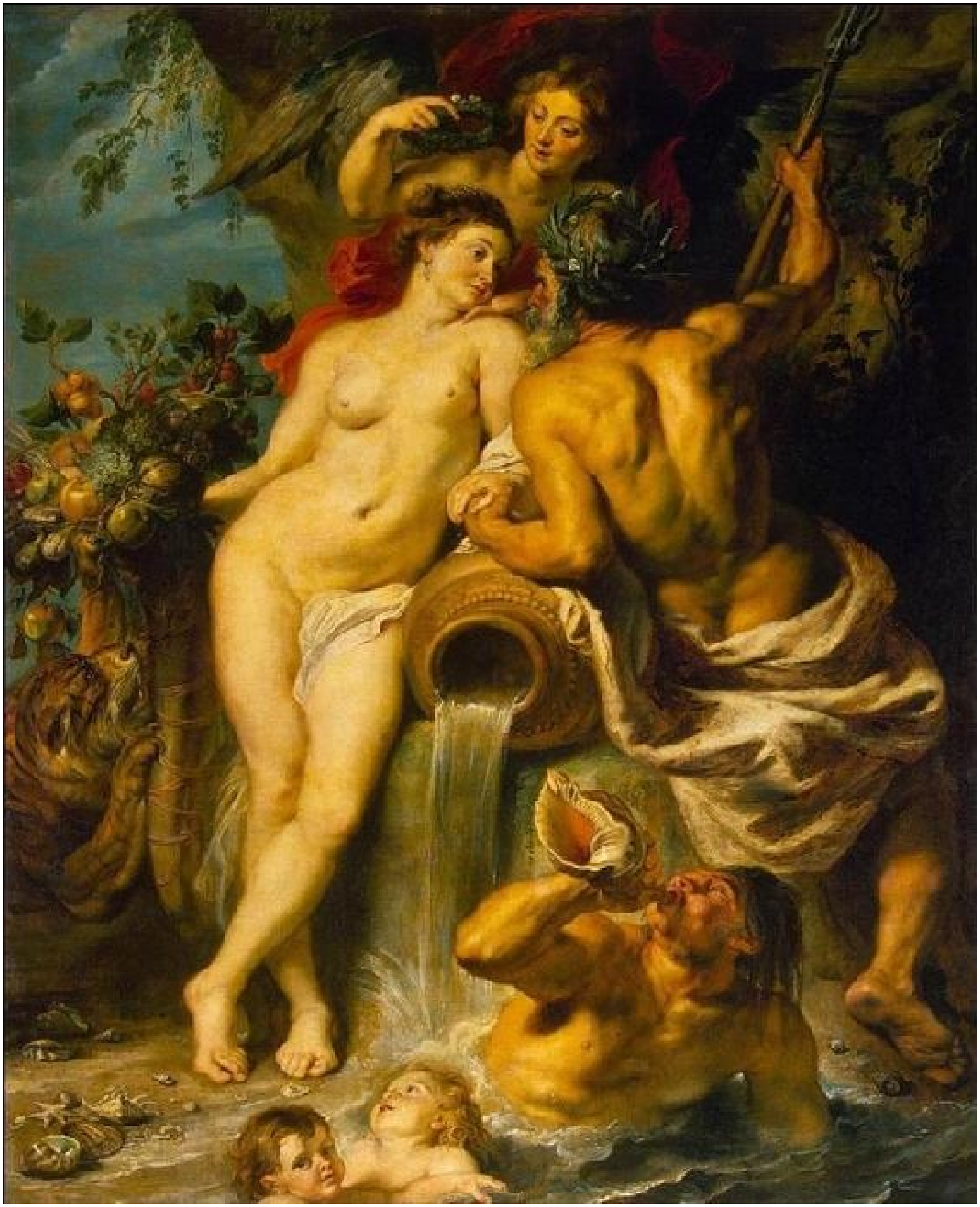
Drunken Silenus

1618
212 x 213 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



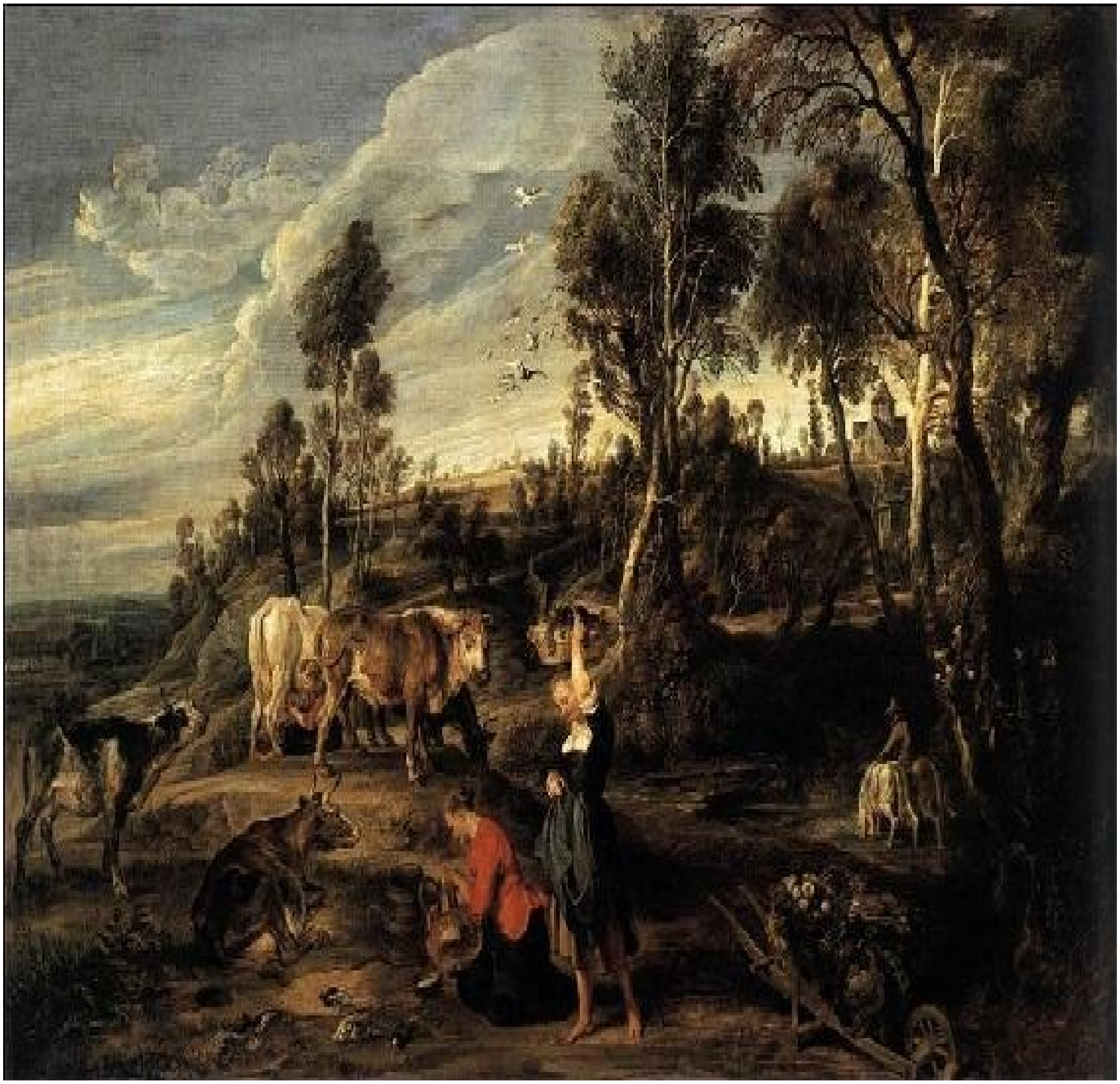
The Union of Earth and Water

c. 1618
Oil on canvas, 223 x 181 cm
The Hermitage, St. Petersburg



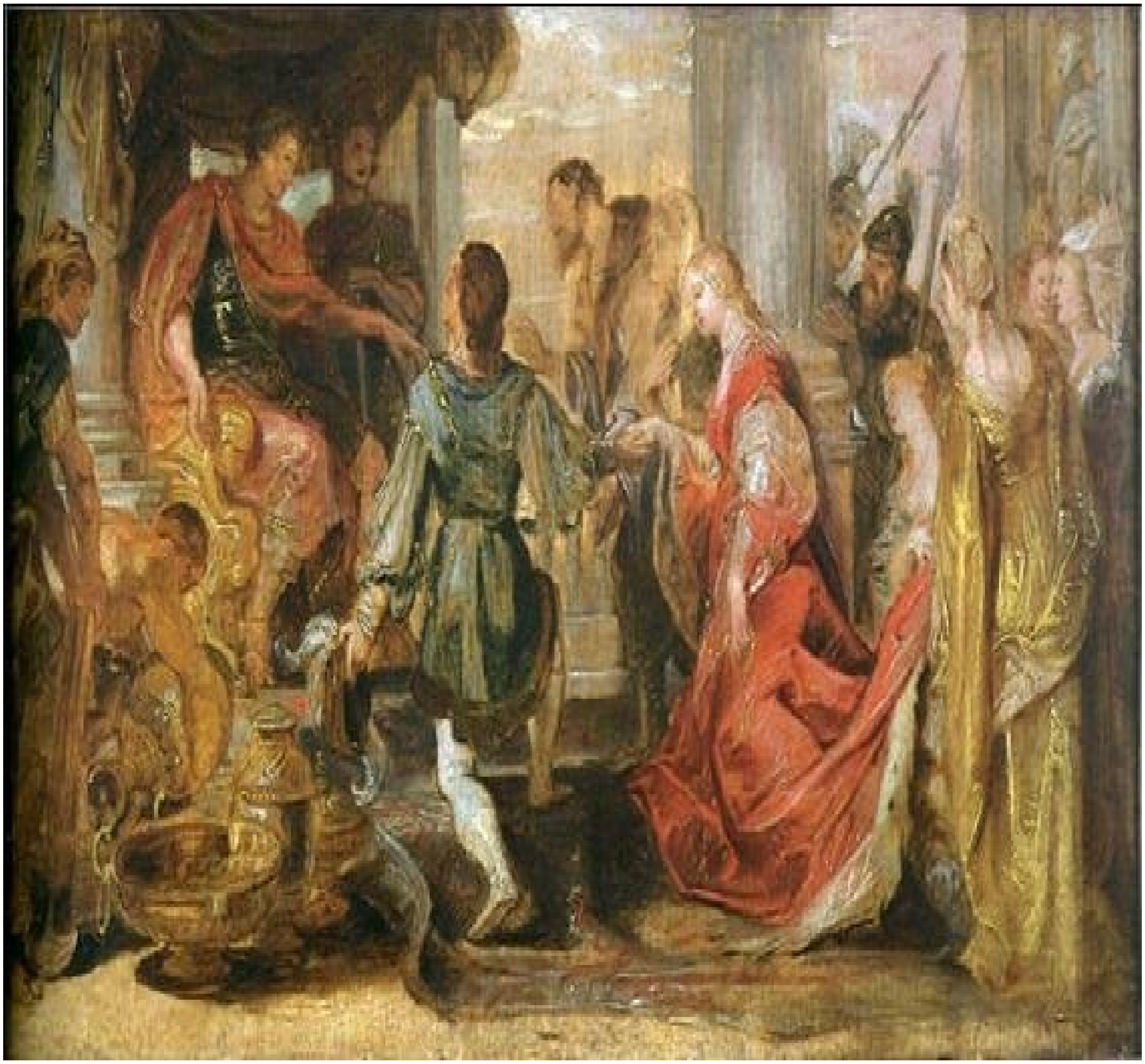
Farm at Laken

c.1618
Royal Collection, Buckingham Palace, London, England



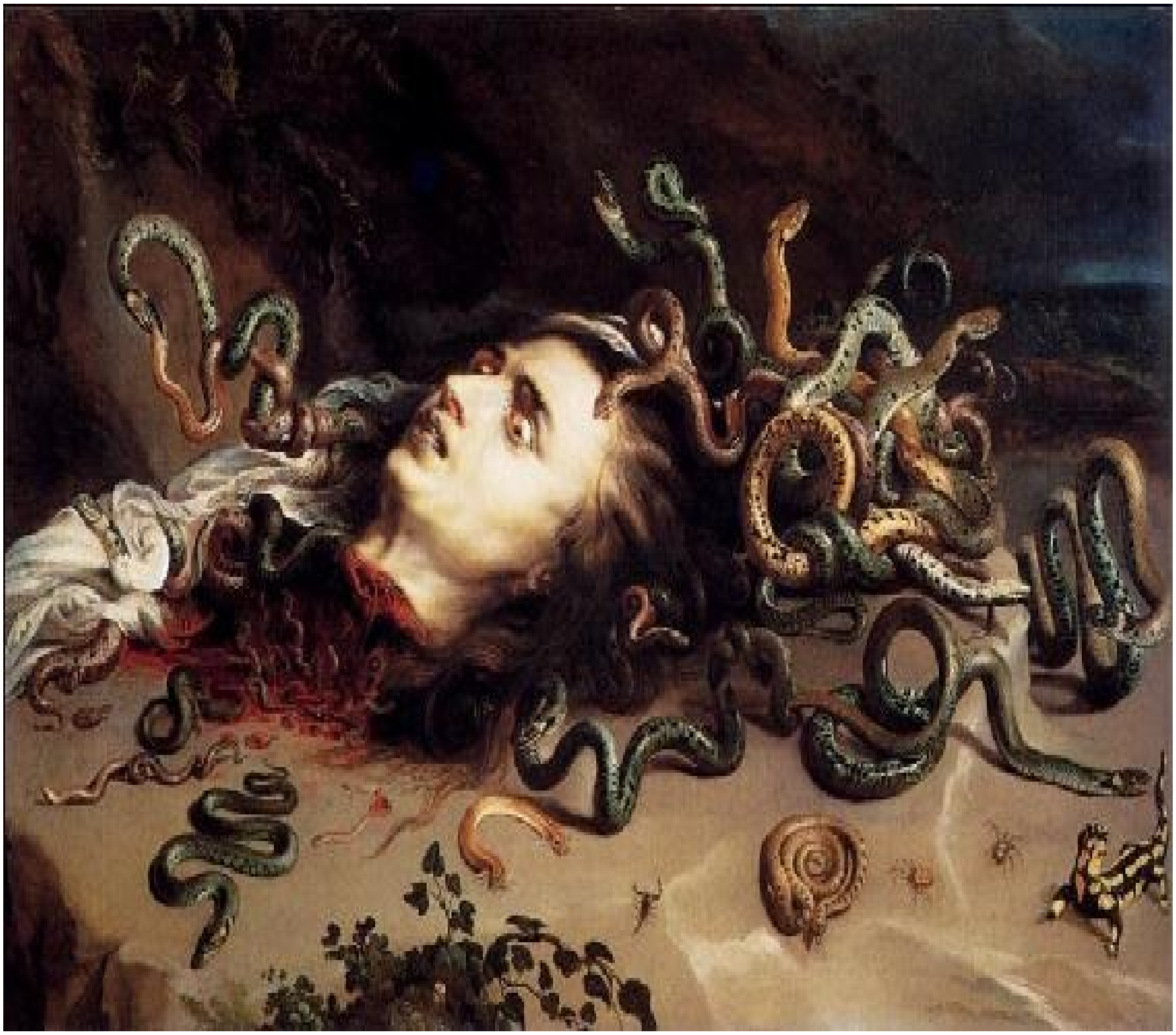
Generosity of Scipio

c.1618
31 x 50 cm
Private Collection



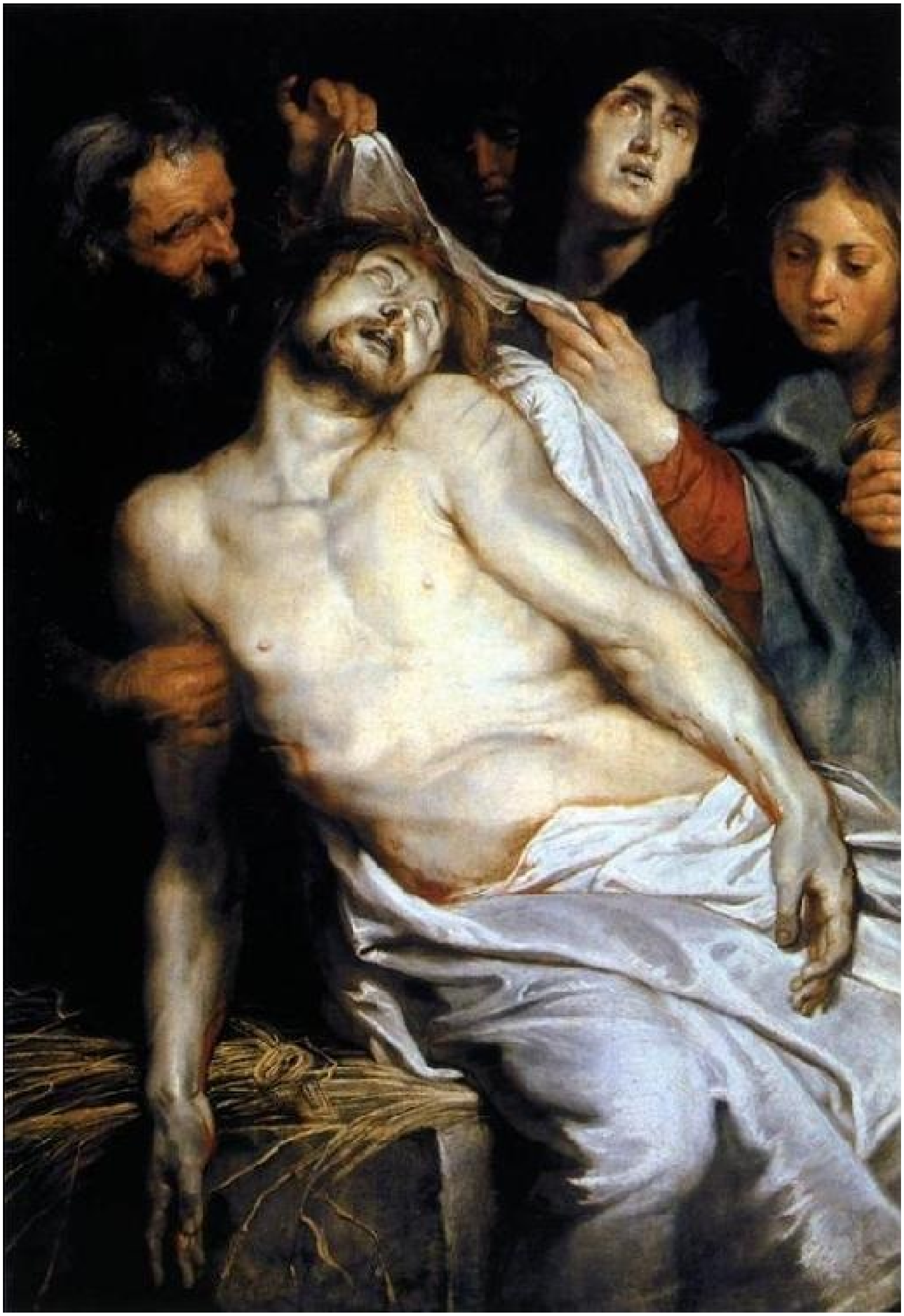
Head Of Medusa

c.1618
69 x 118 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



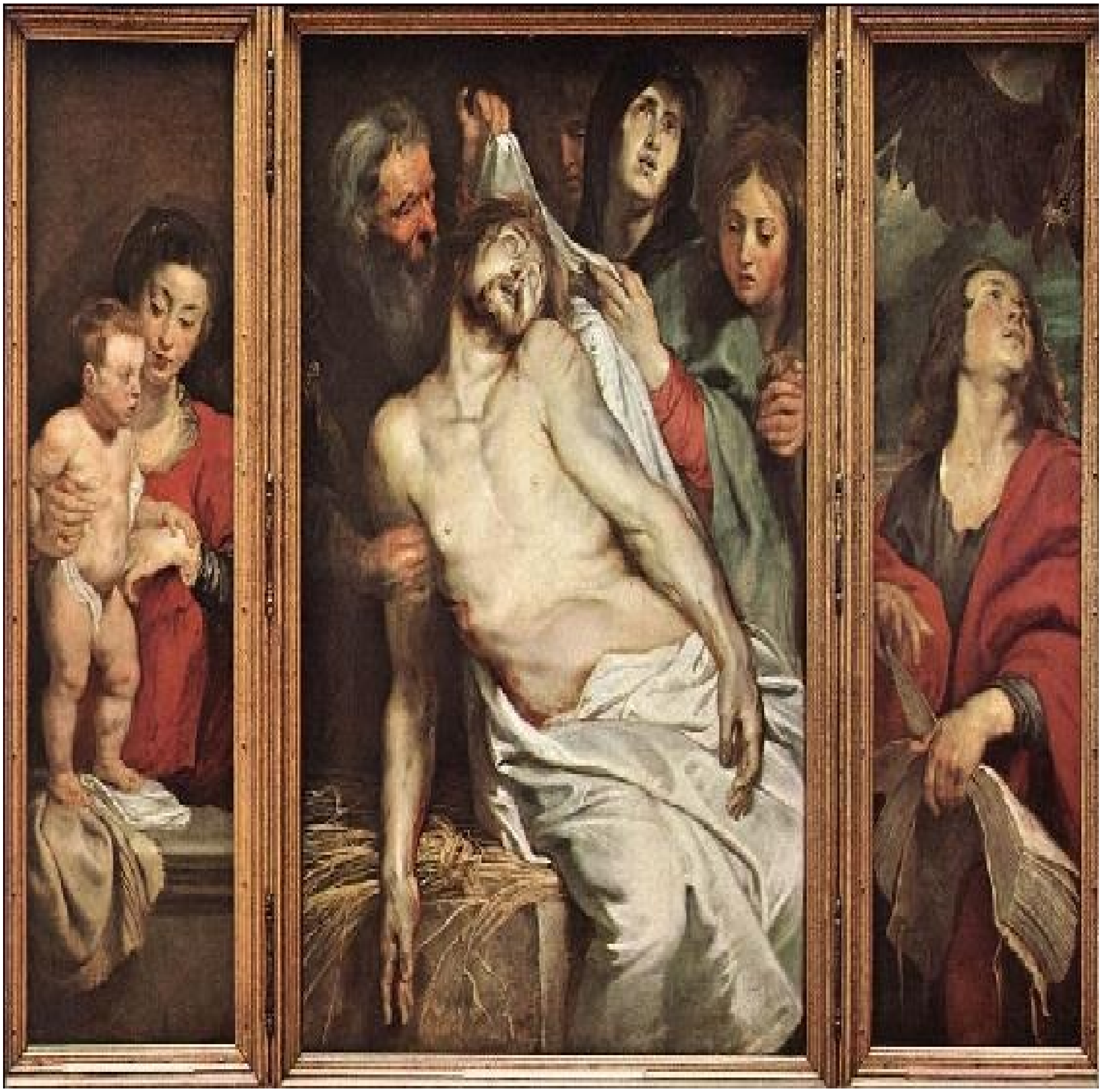
Lamentation (Christ on the Straw)

1618
138 x 98 cm



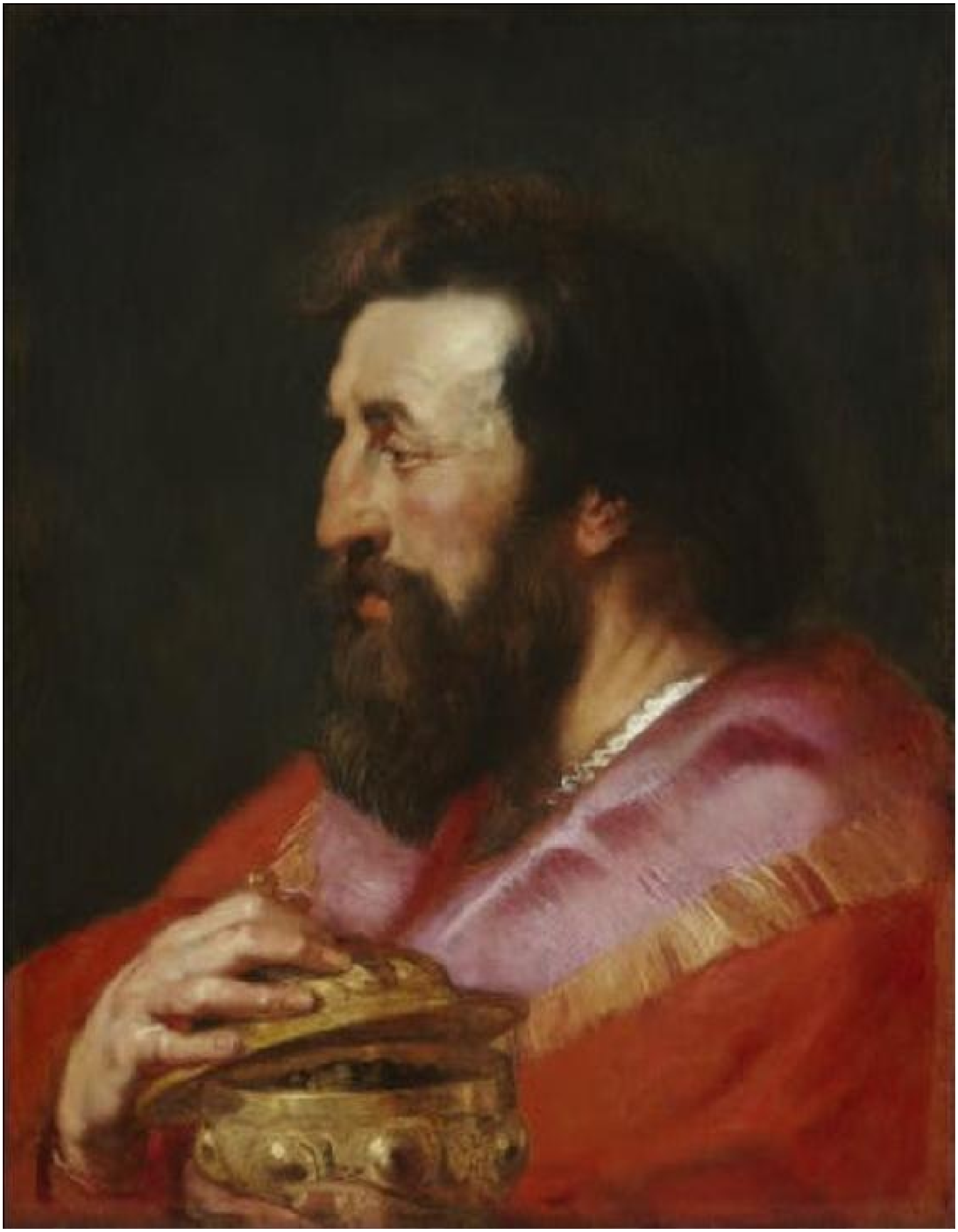
Lamentation of Christ

1618



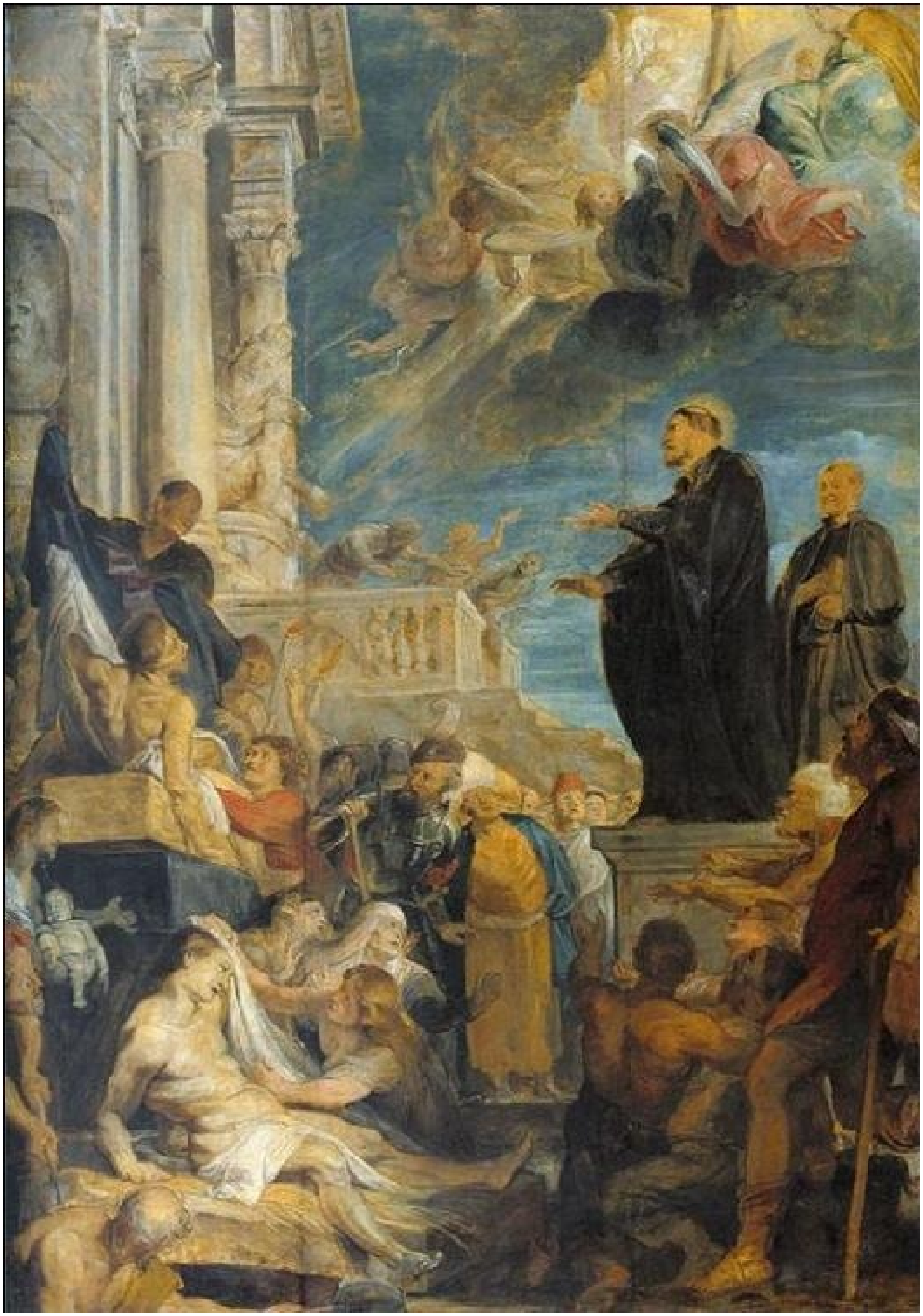
Melchior, The Assyrian King

c.1618
67 x 52 cm



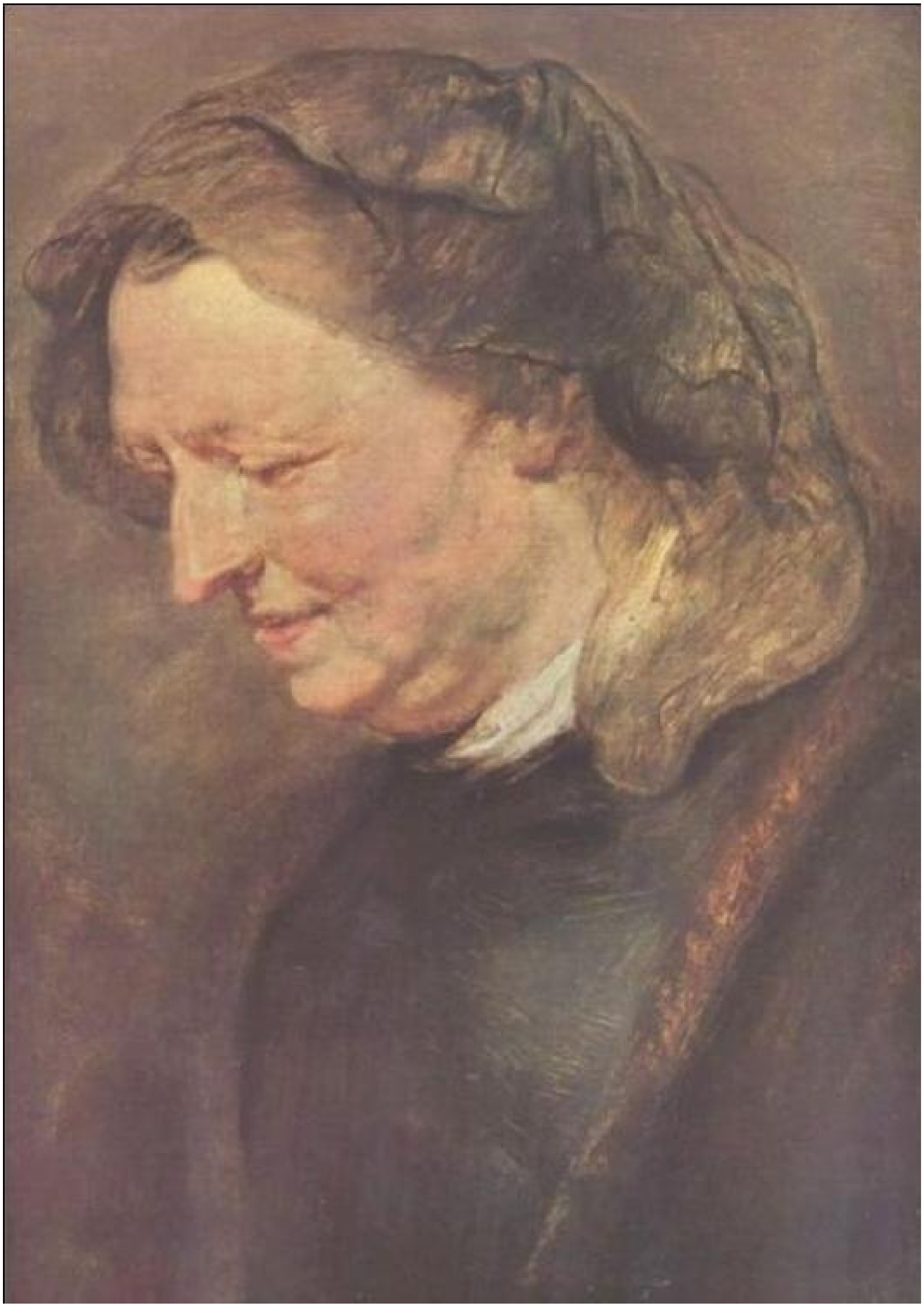
Miracle of St. Francis

1618
105 x 73 cm



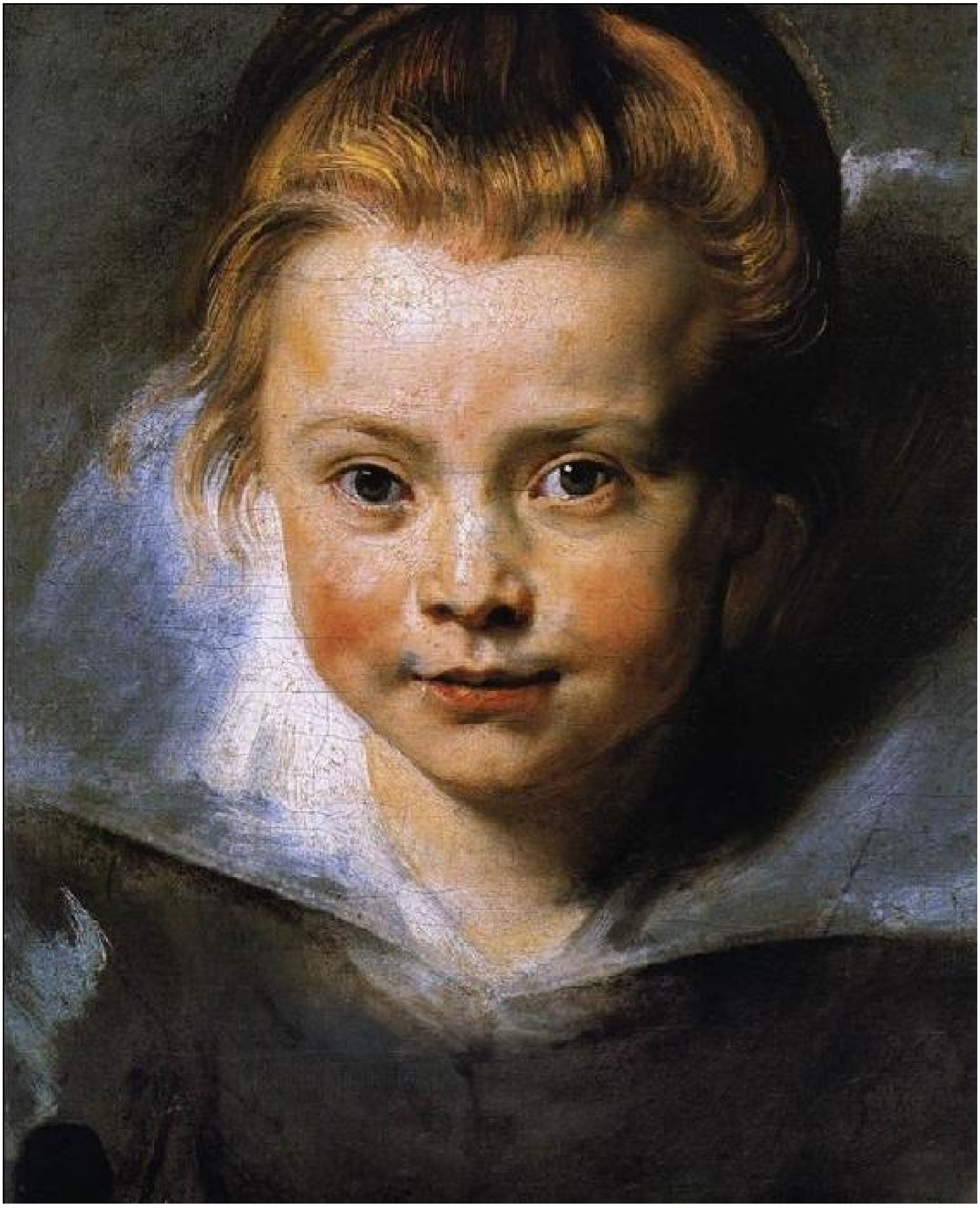
Old woman

1618
49 x 32 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



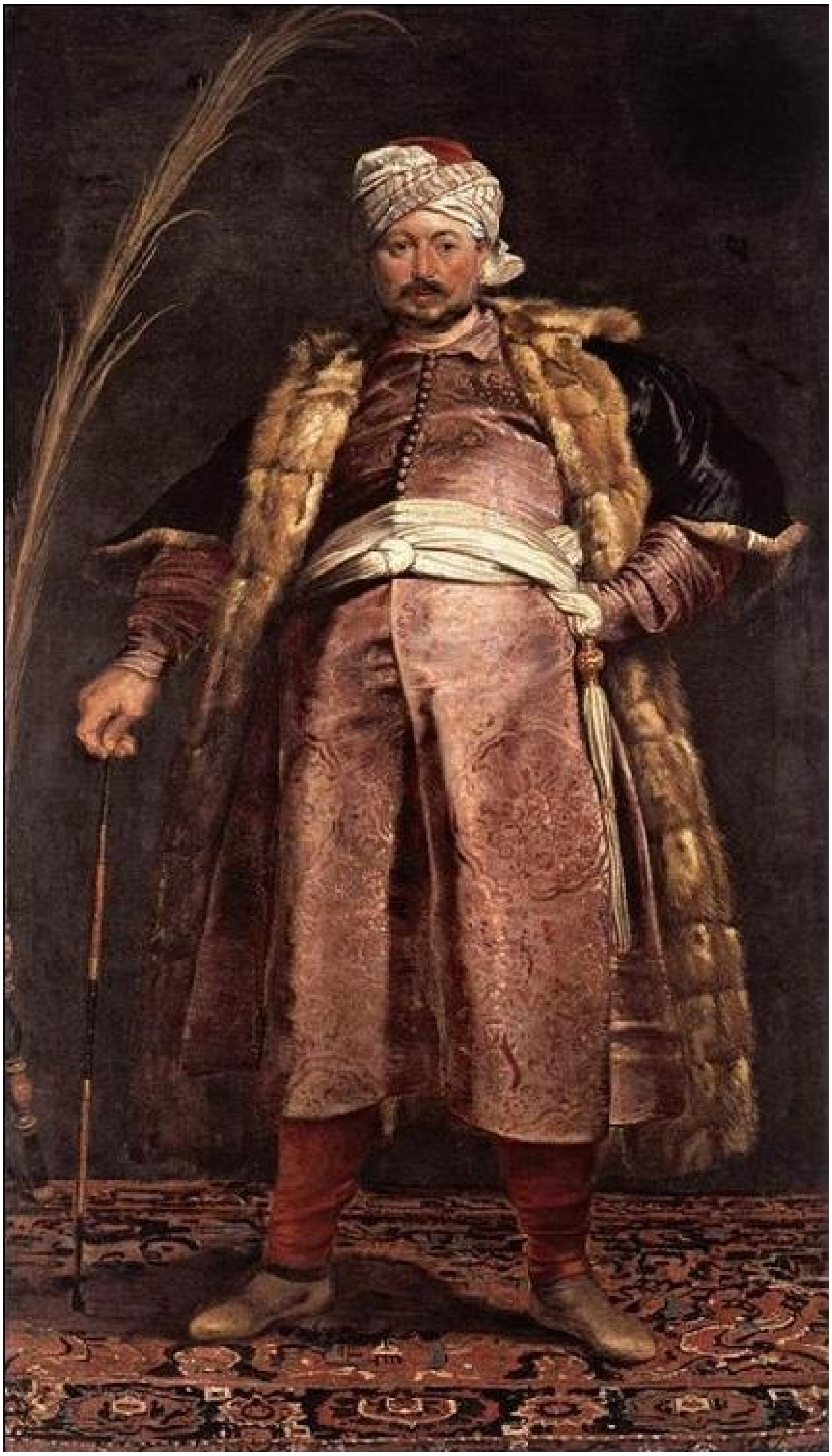
Portrait of Clara Serena Rubens

1618
37 x 27 cm
Collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein, Schloss Vaduz



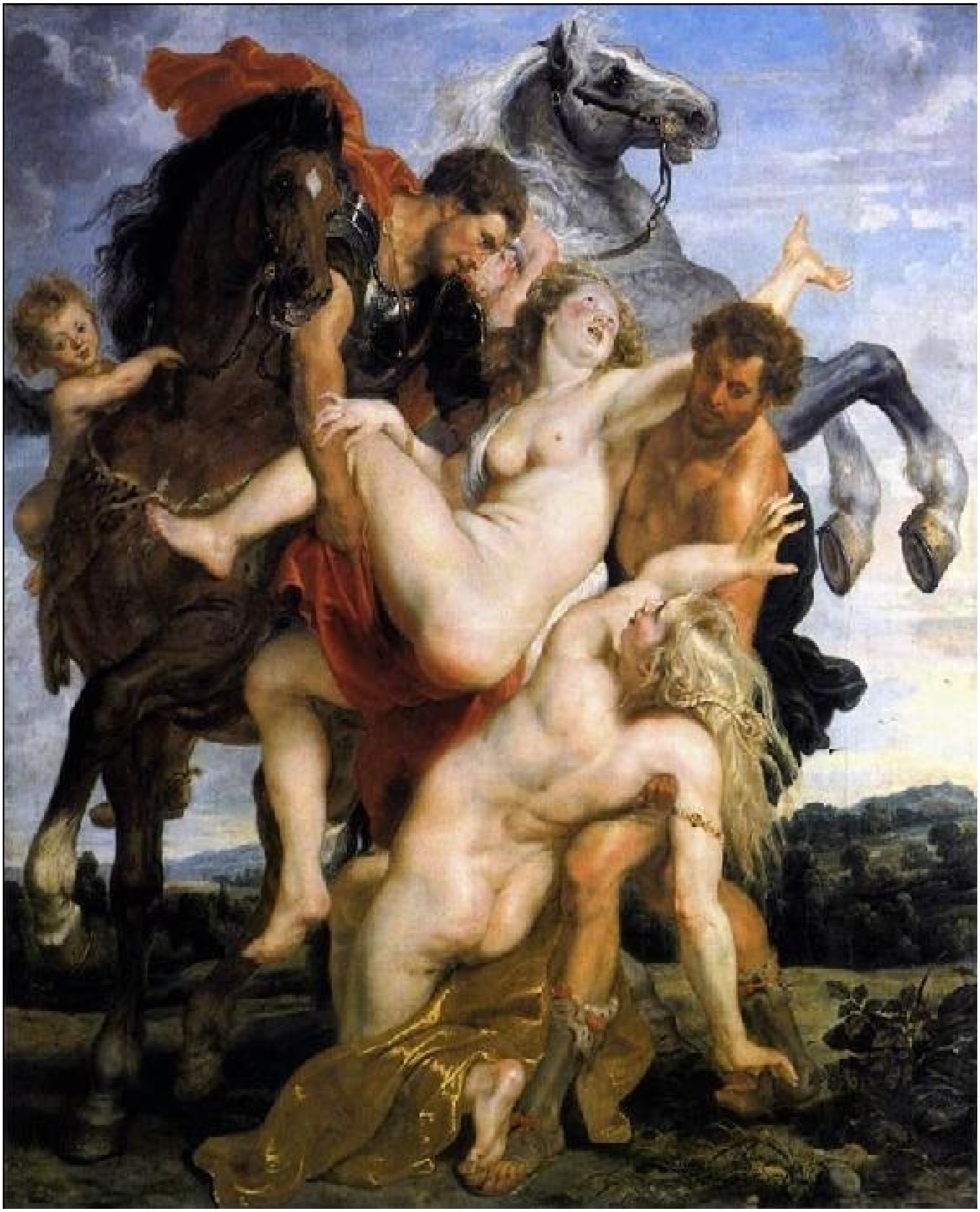
Portrait of Nicolas de Respaigne

1618
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, Germany



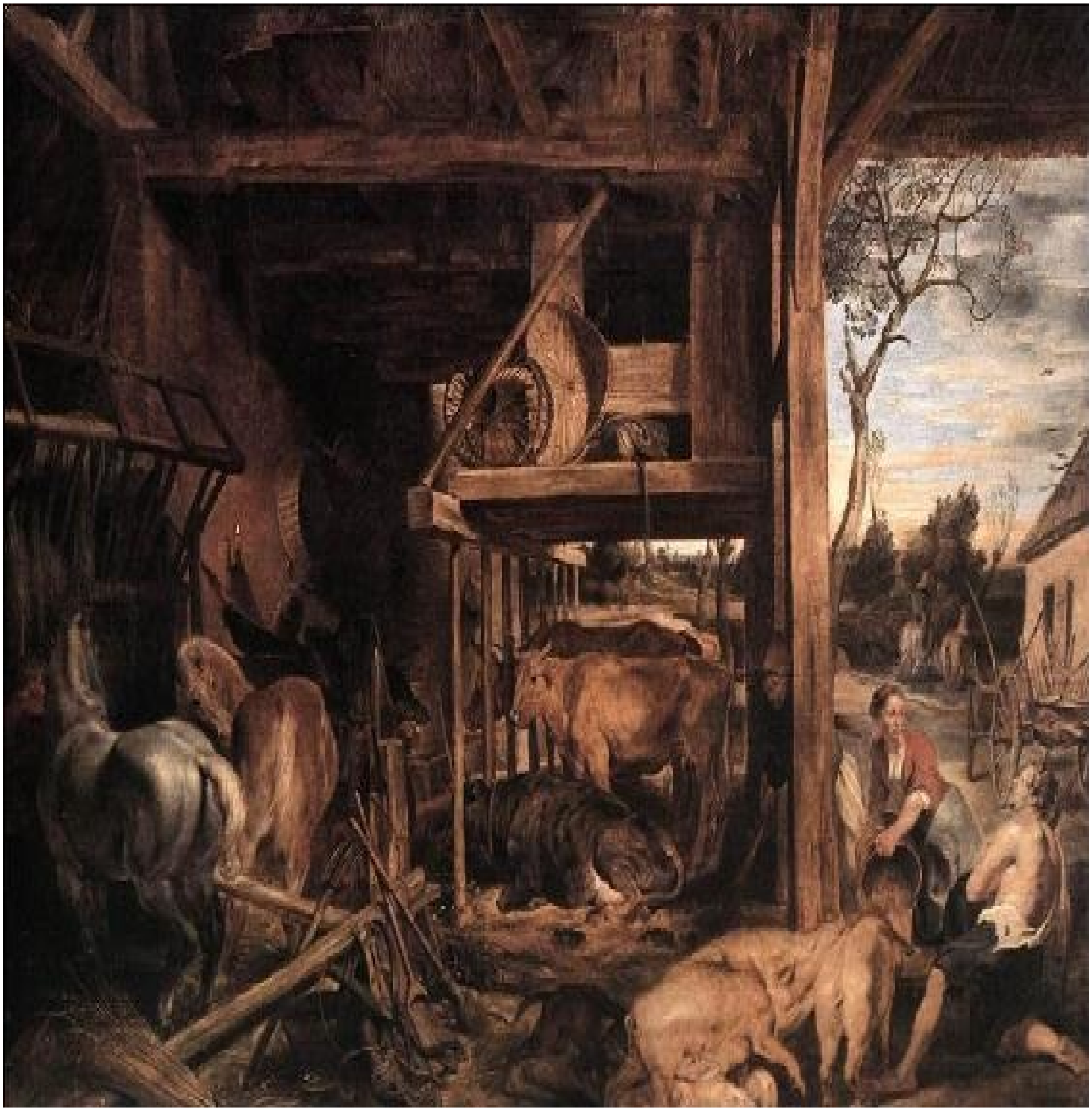
Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus

c.1618
224 x 210.5 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



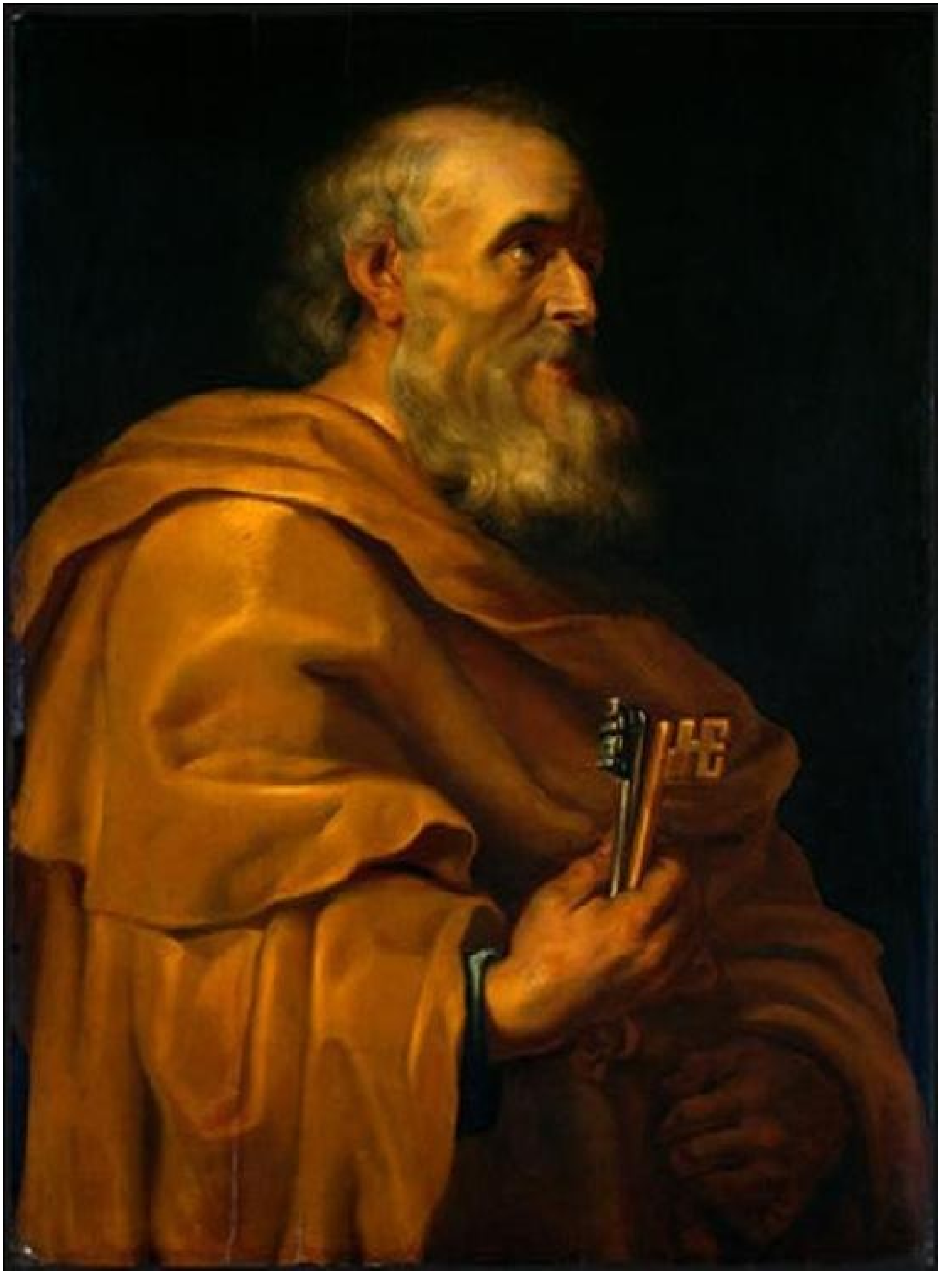
Return of the Prodigal Son

c.1618
107 x 155 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten



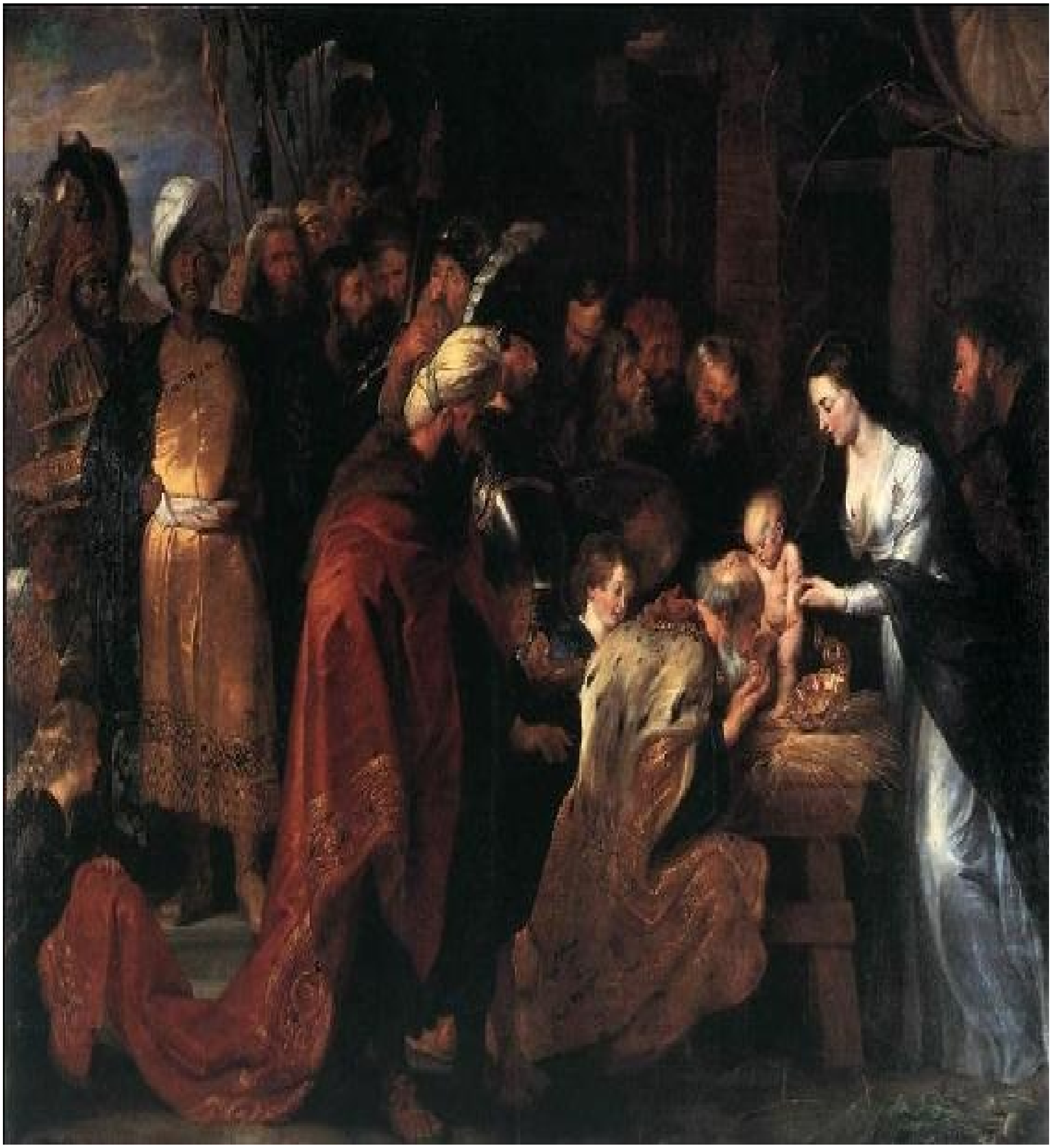
Saint Peter

c.1618
92 x 68 cm



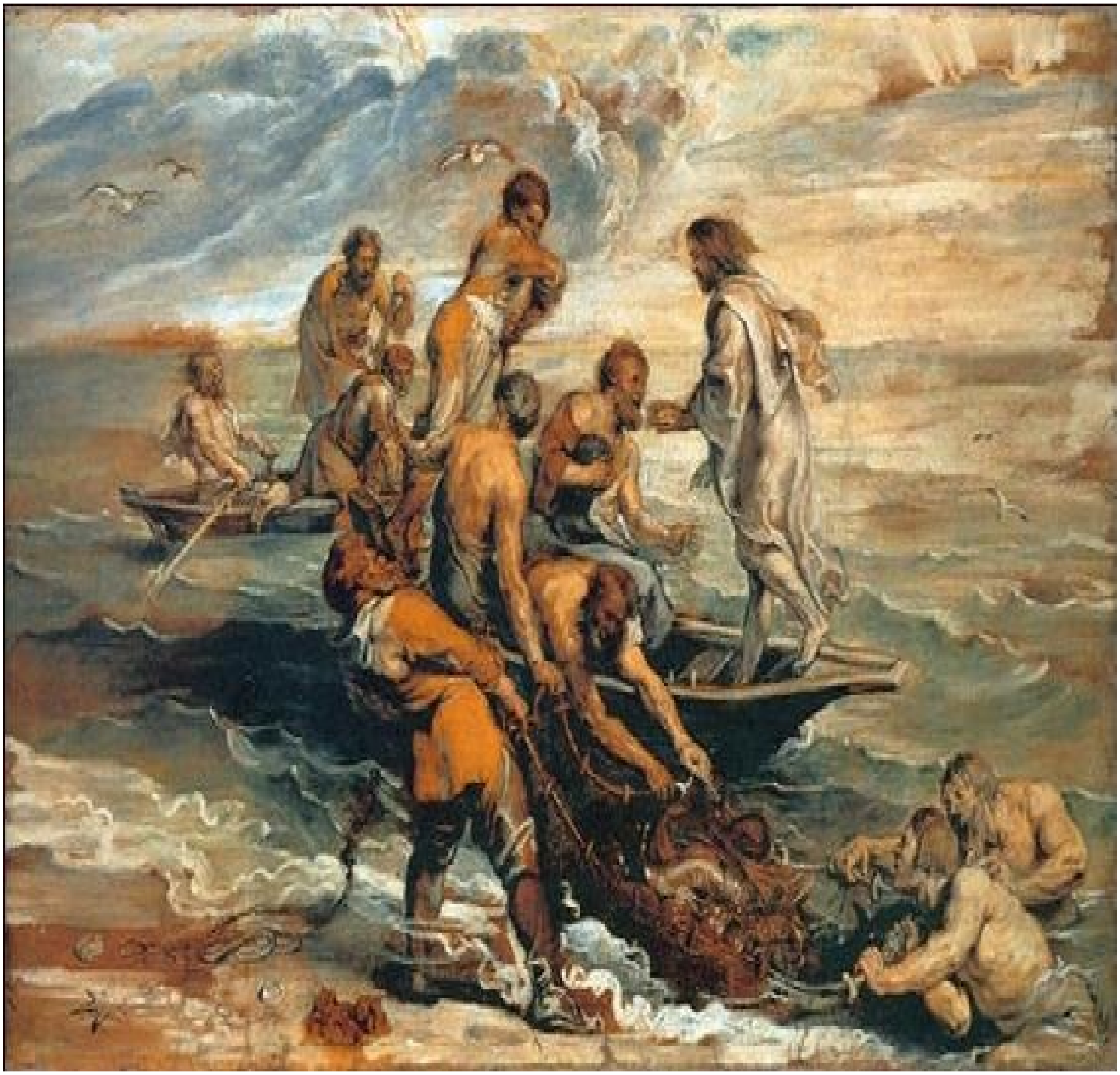
Adoration of the Magi

1619
245 x 325 cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, France



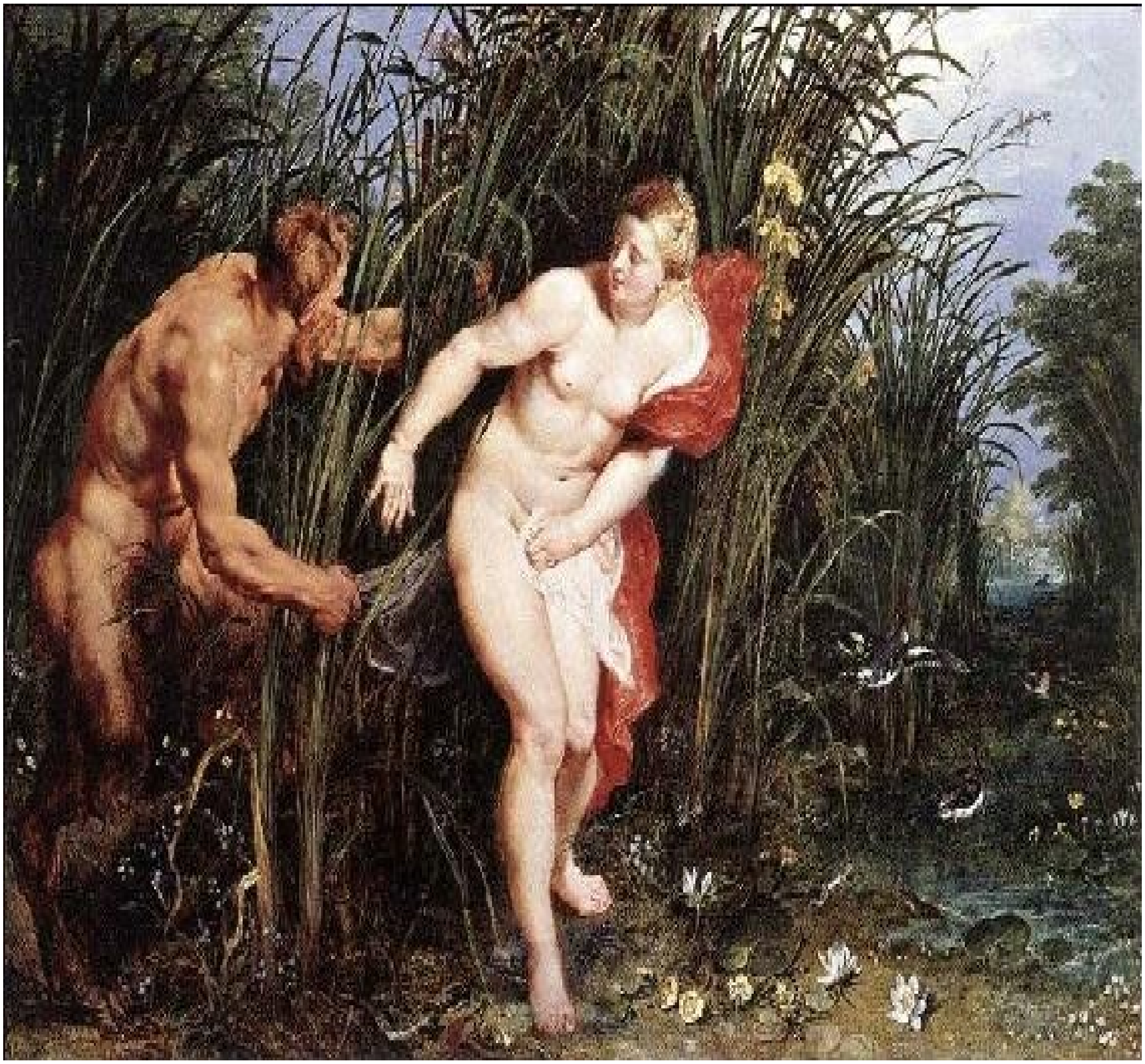
Miraculous Fishing

c.1619
55 x 85 cm



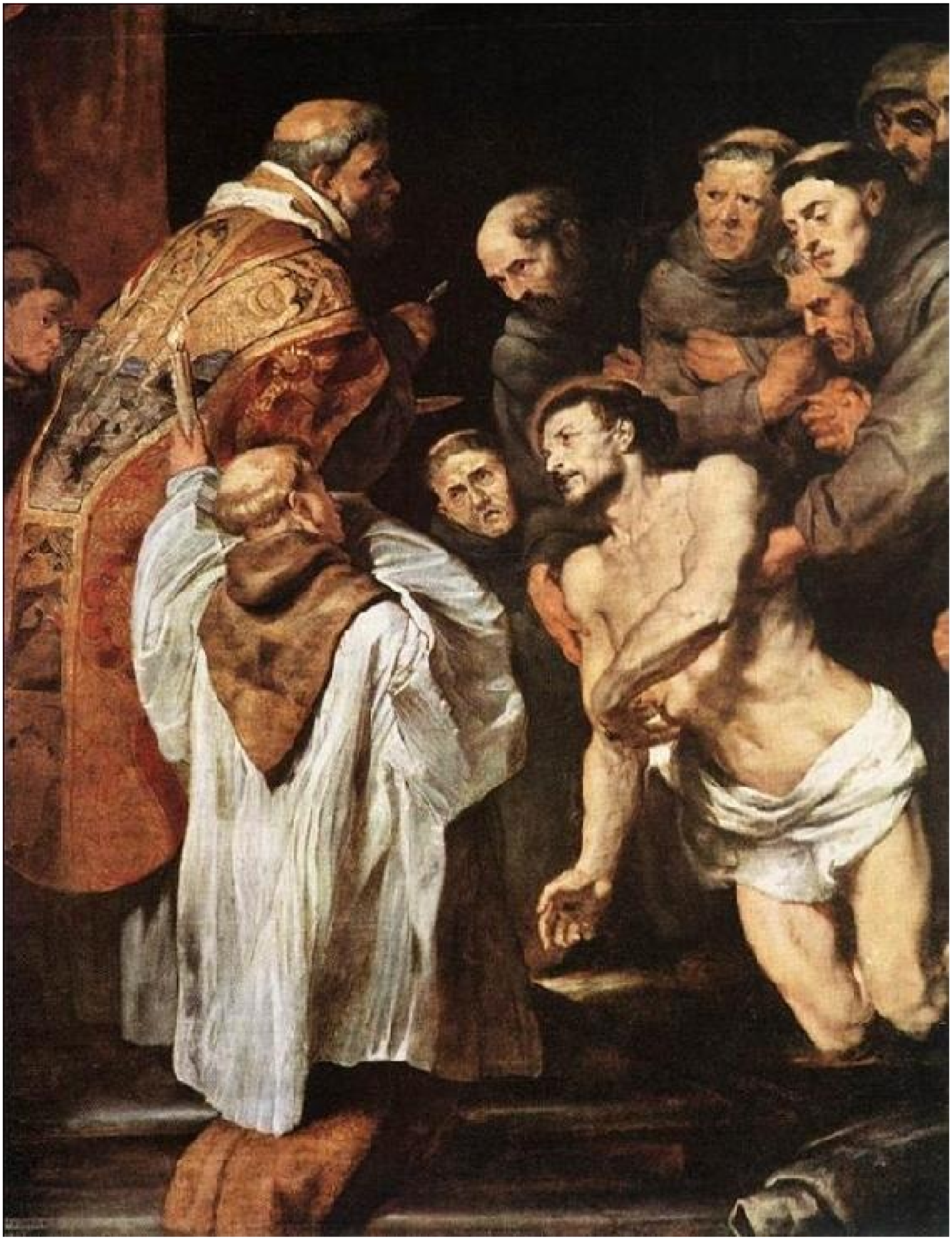
Pan and Syrinx

1619
40 x 61 cm
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, Germany



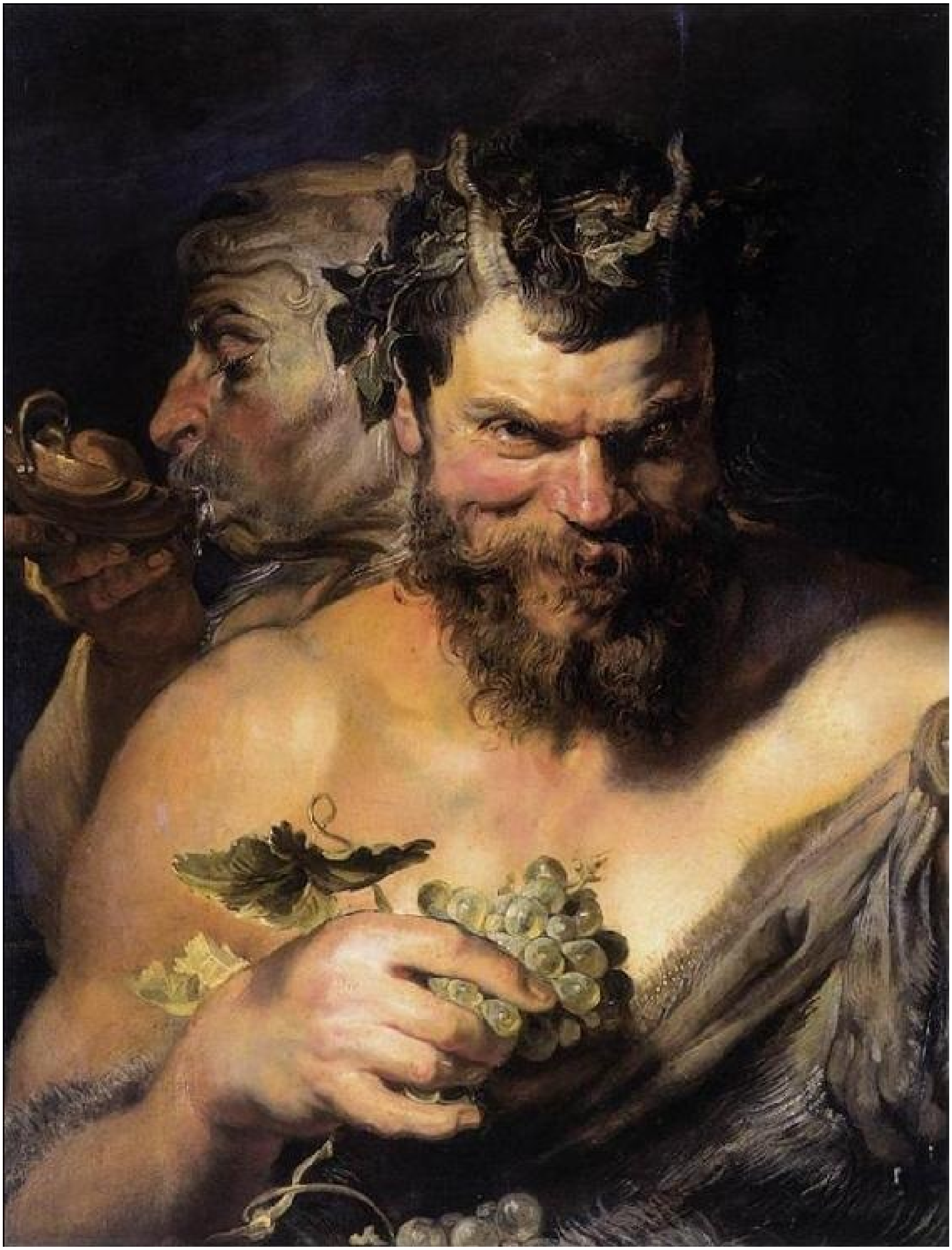
The Last Communion of St. Francis

1619
422 x 226 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten

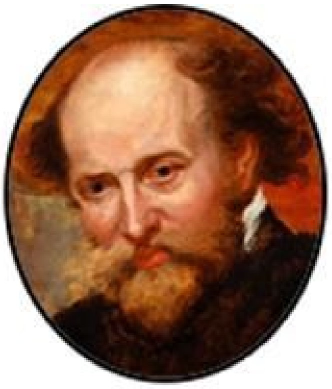


Two Satyrs

1619
76 x 66 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany

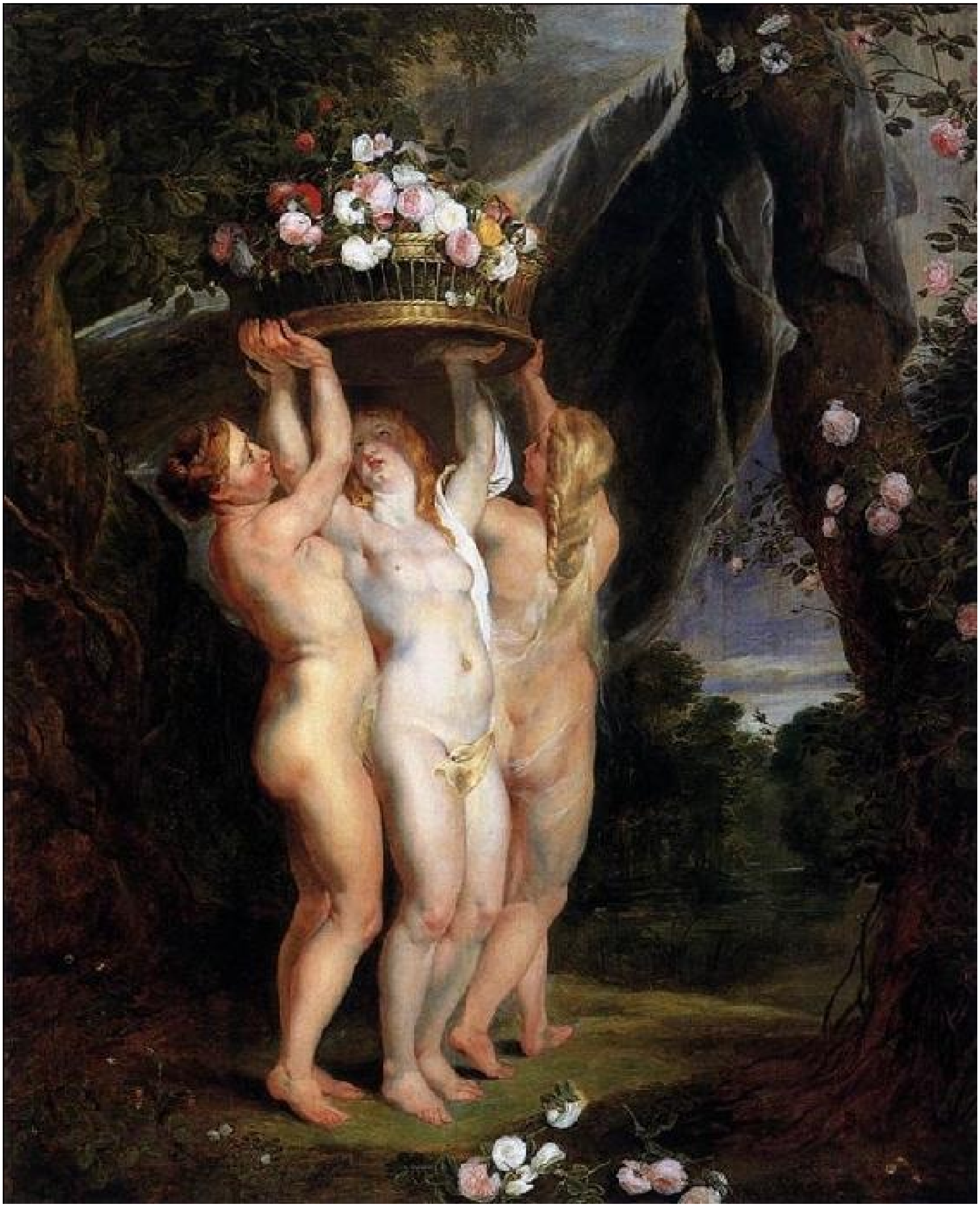


1620’s



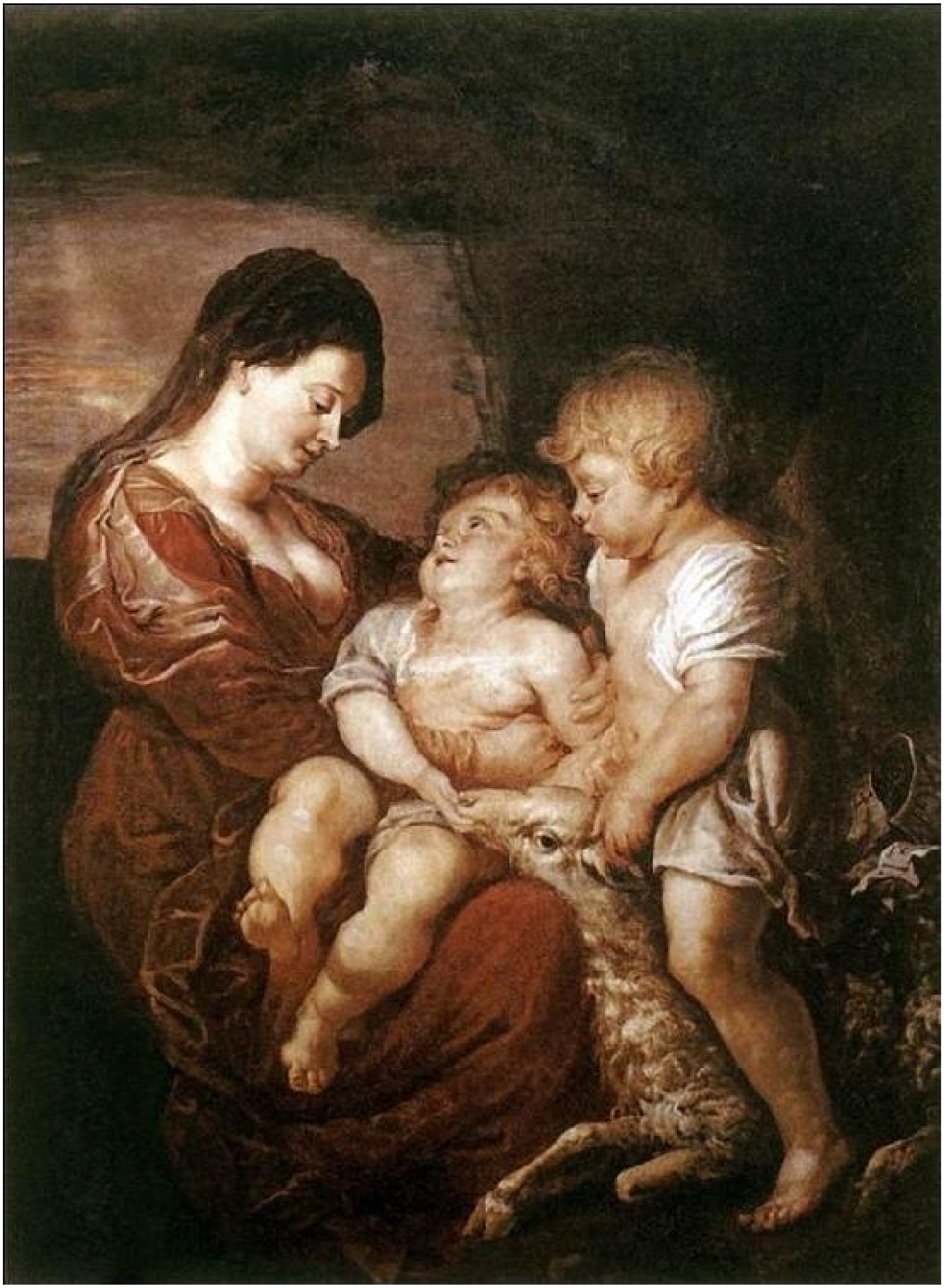
The Three Graces

1620-22
Oil on wood, 119 x 99 cm
Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna



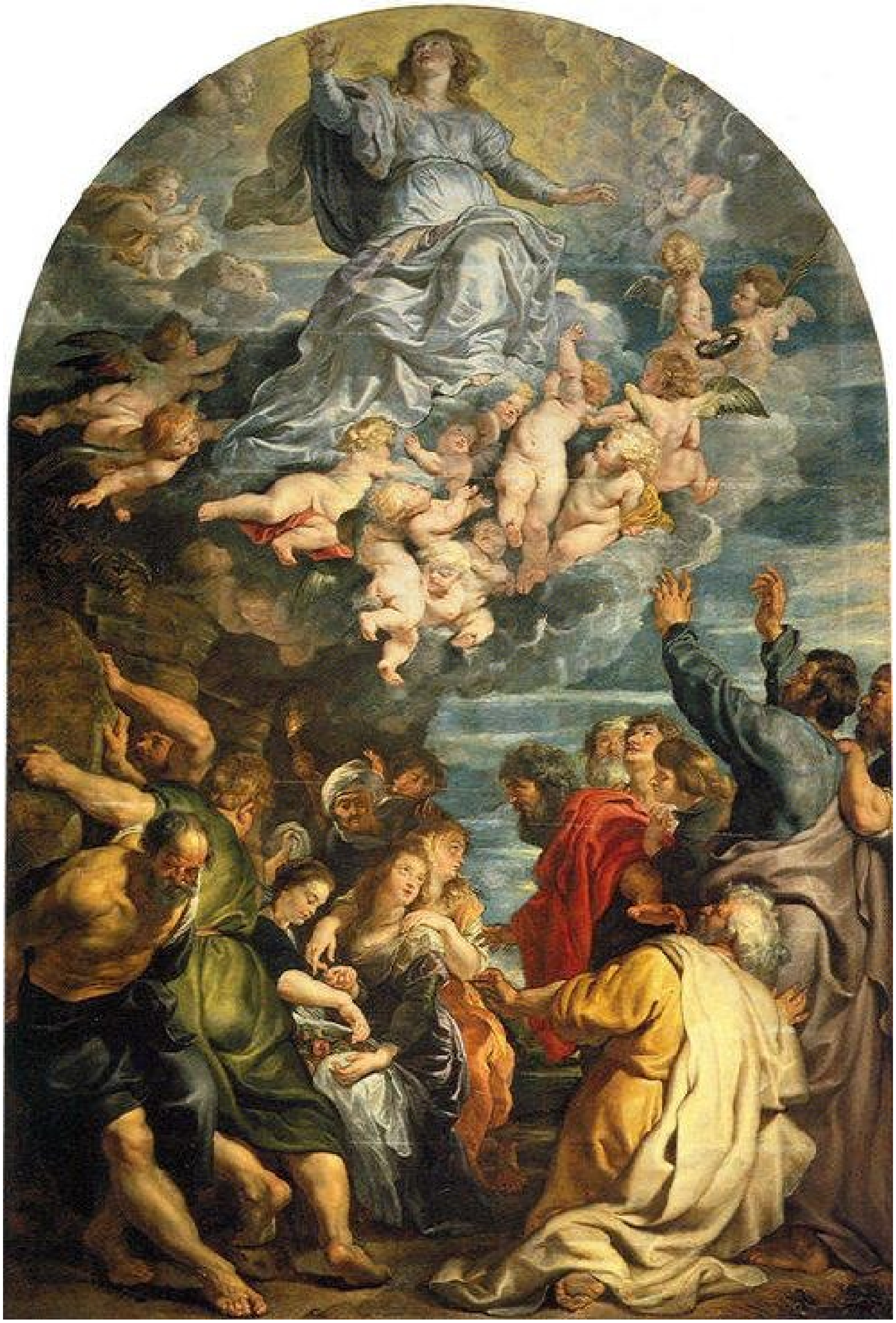
Virgin and Child with the Infant St. John

c.1620
Santa Maria del Giglio, Venice, Italy



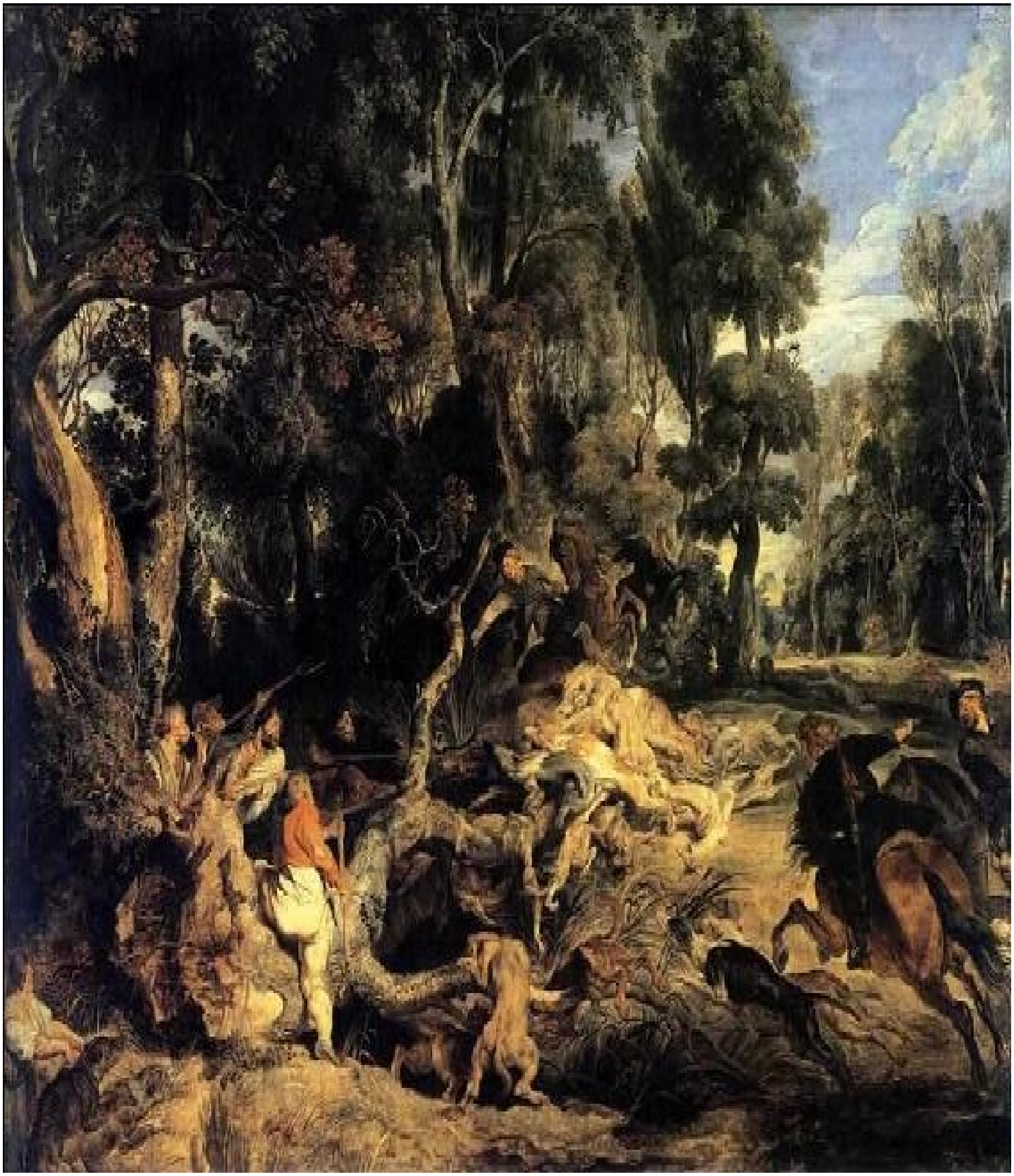
Assumption of Virgin

1620
458 x 297 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



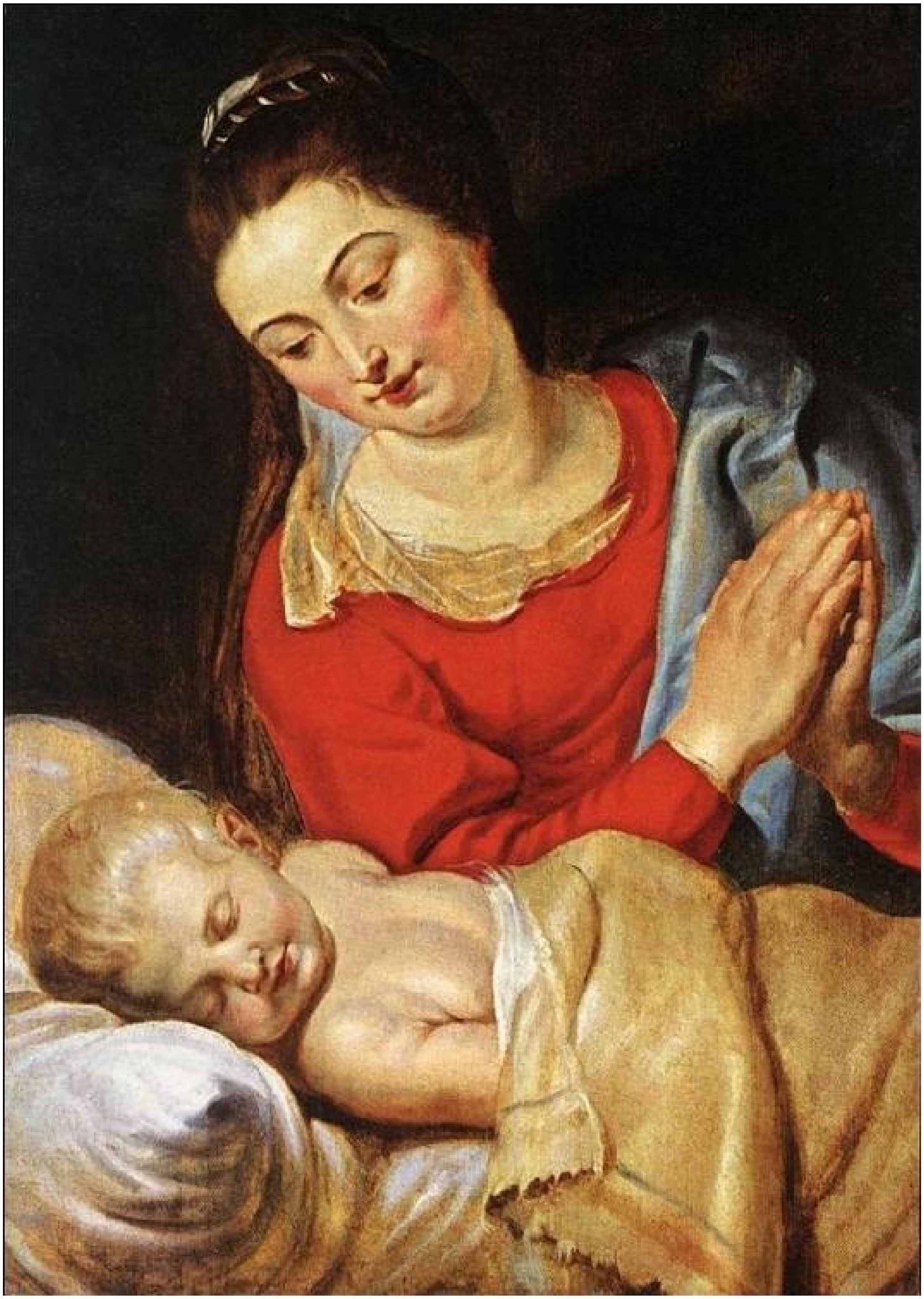
Boar Hunt

c.1620
137 x 168 cm



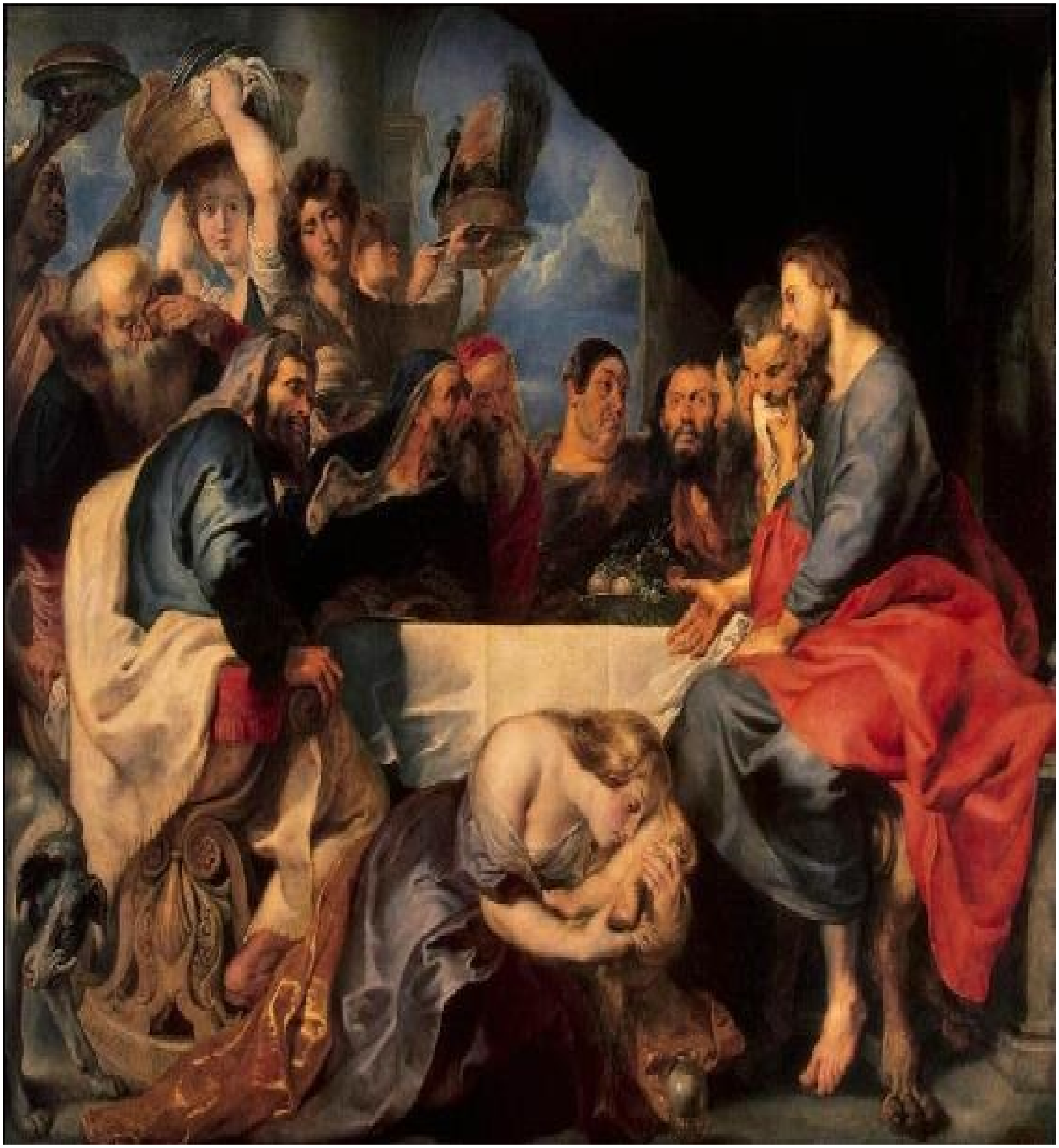
Virgin and Child

c.1620
62 x 50 cm



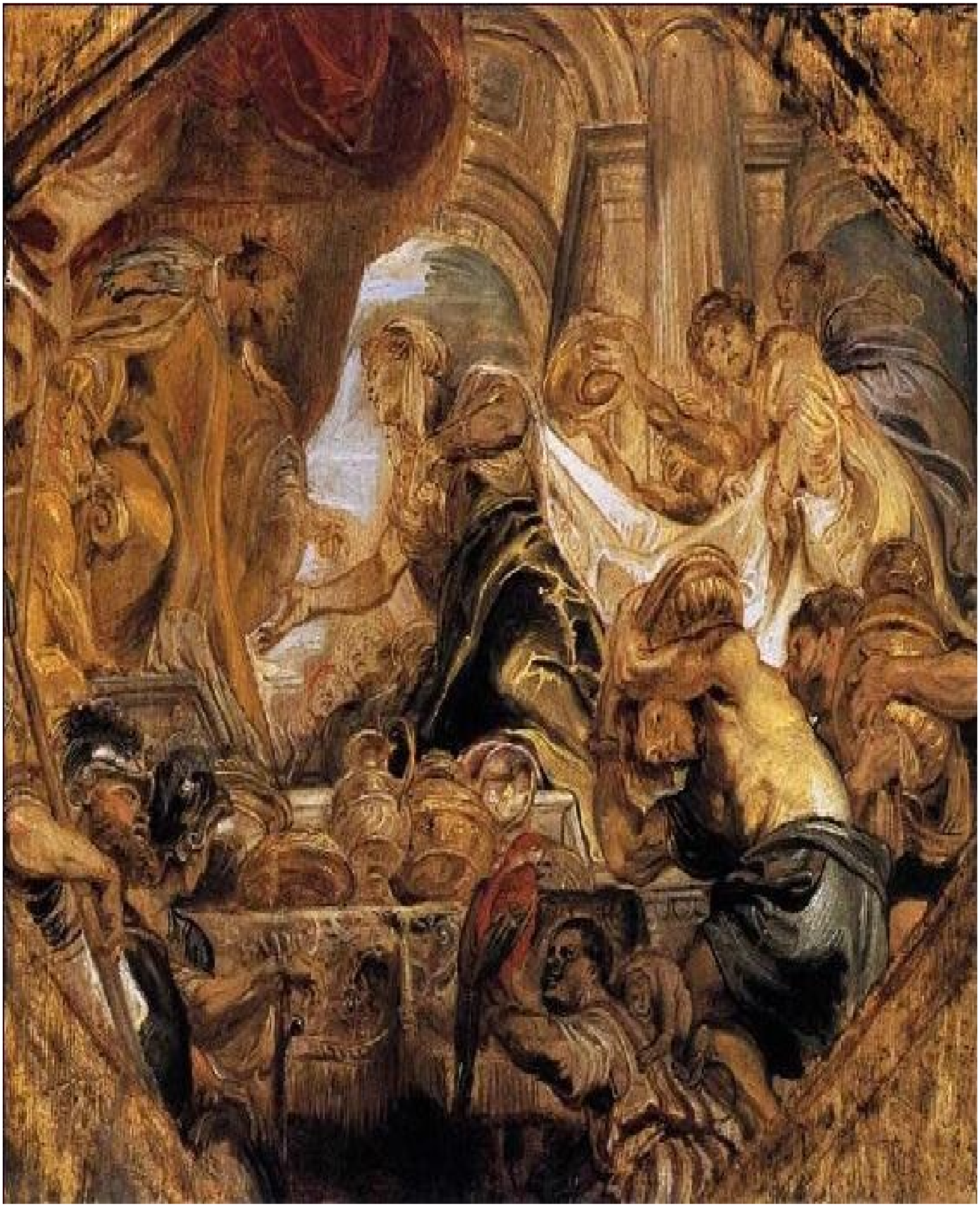
Christ at Simon the Pharisee

1620
189 x 254.5 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



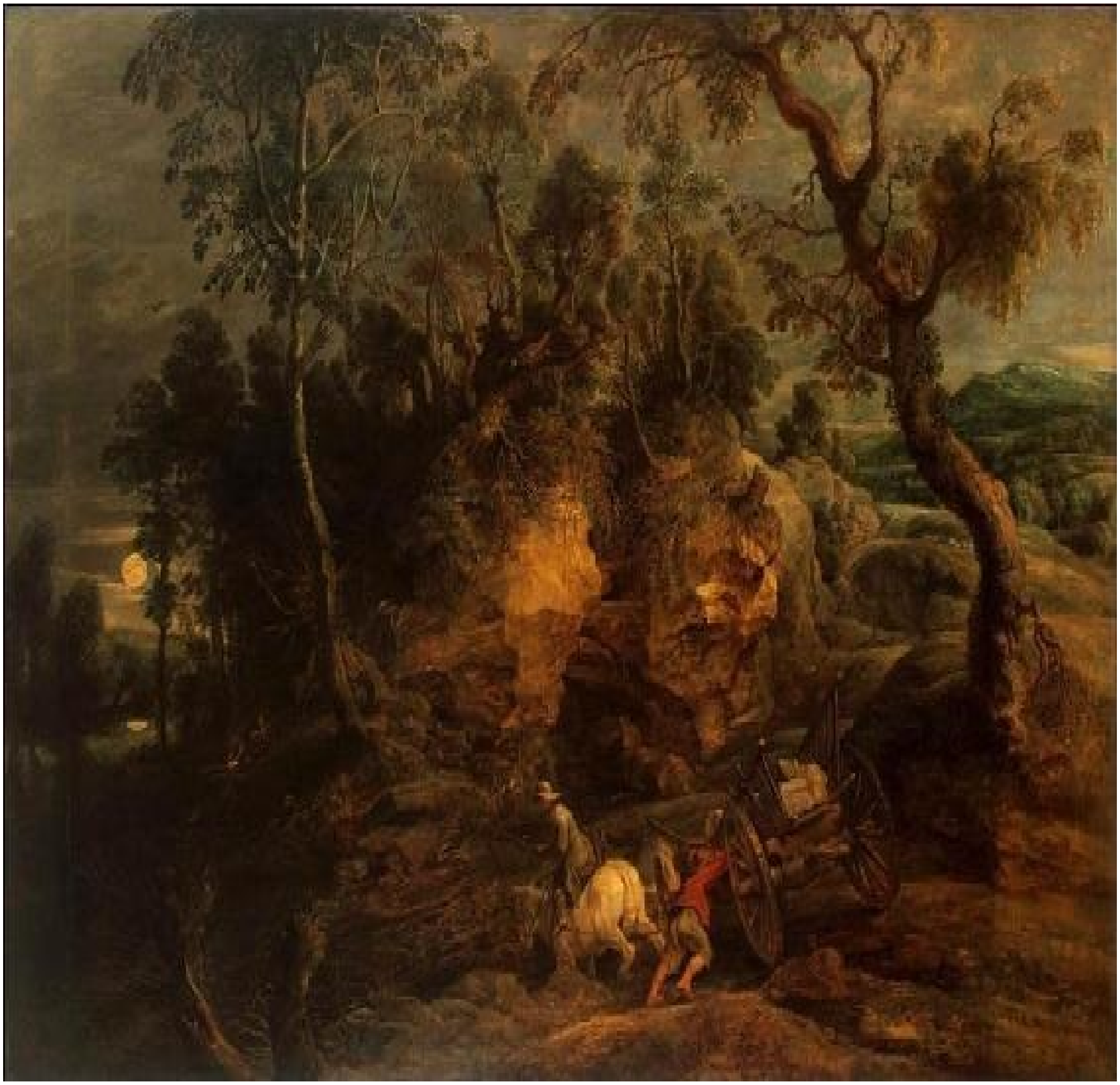
King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

1620
41 x 46 cm
Courtauld Institute of Art, London



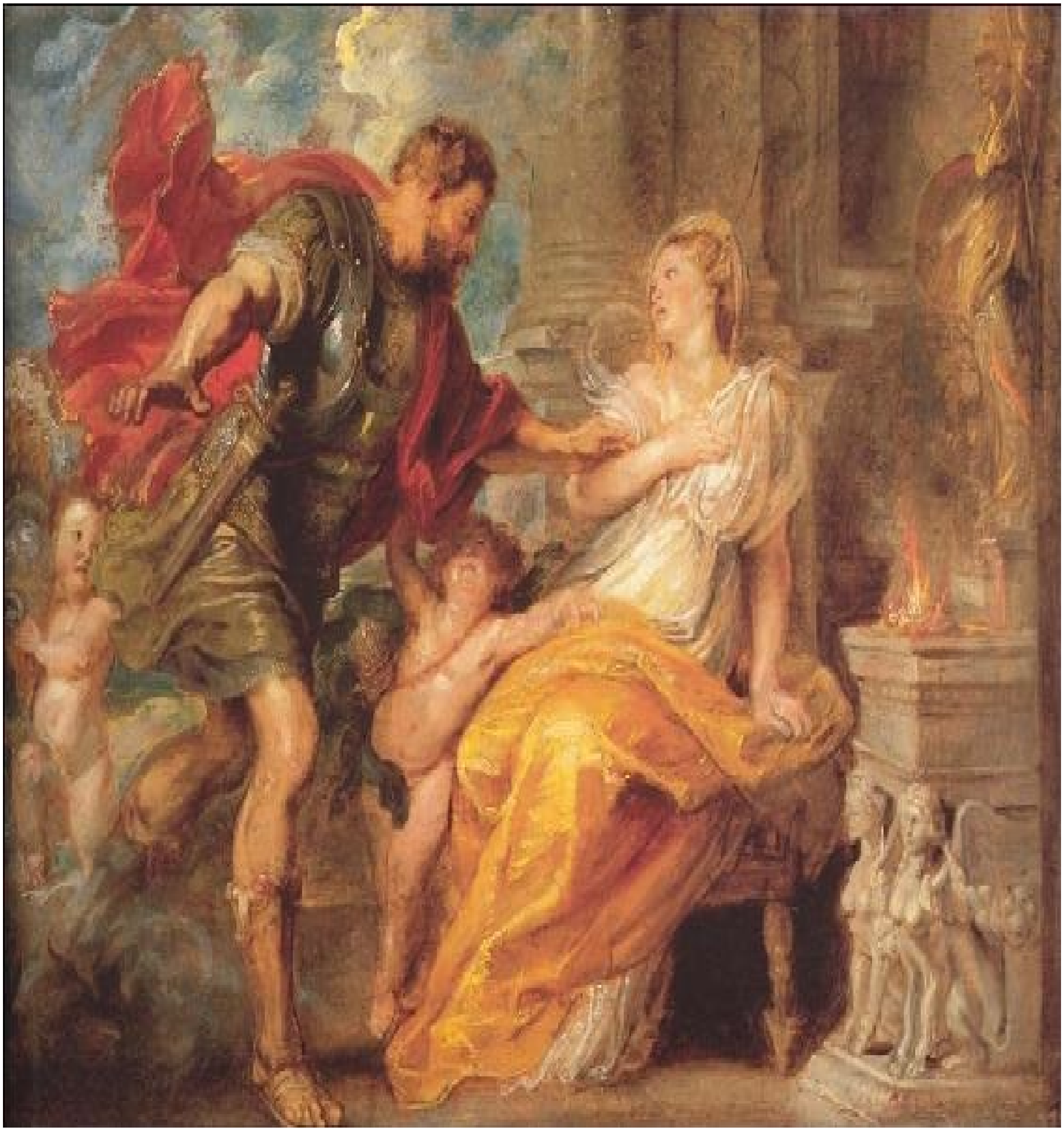
Landscape with Stone Carriers

c.1620
86 x 127 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



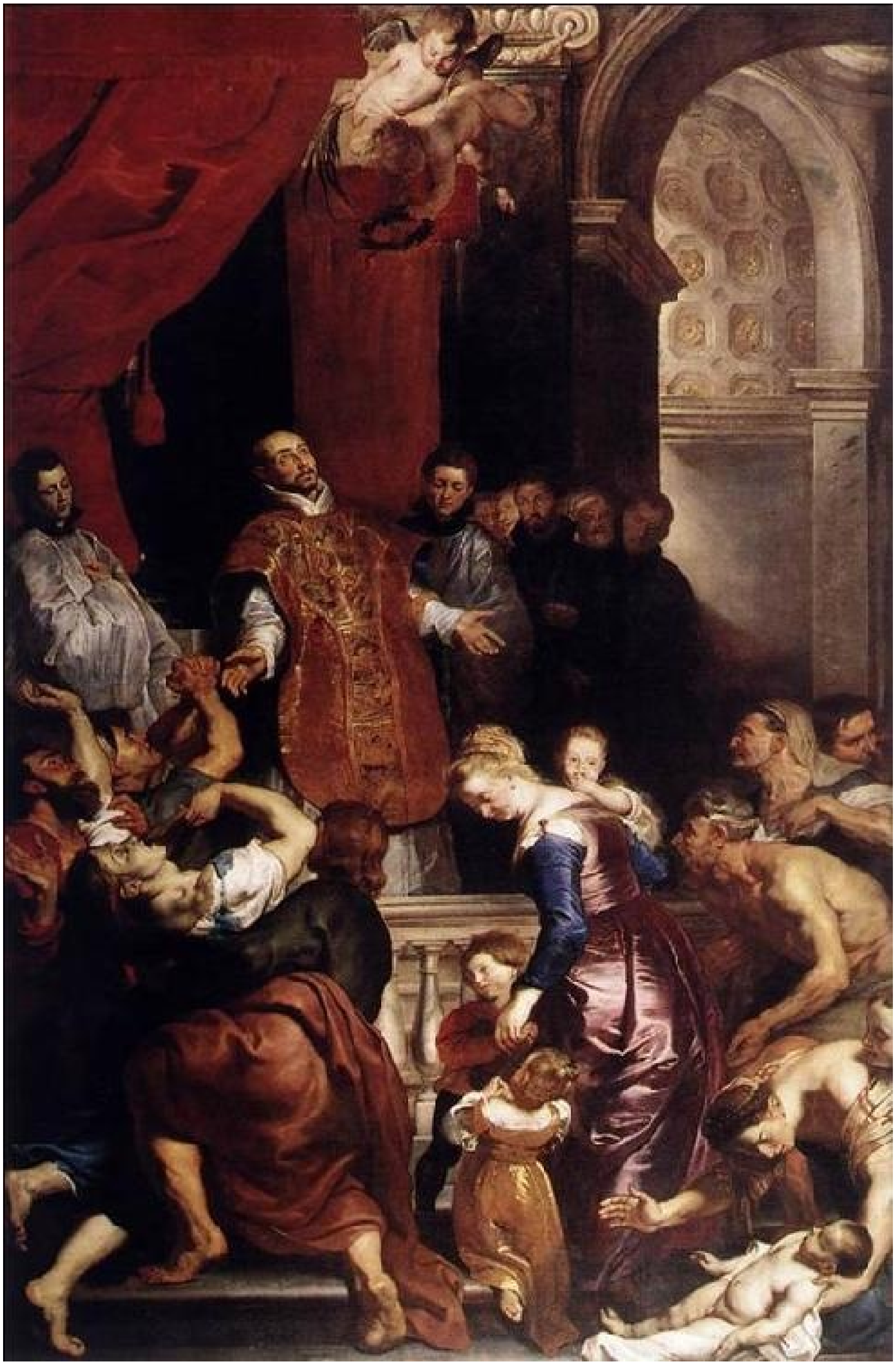
Mars and Rhea Silvia

c.1620
463 x 645 cm



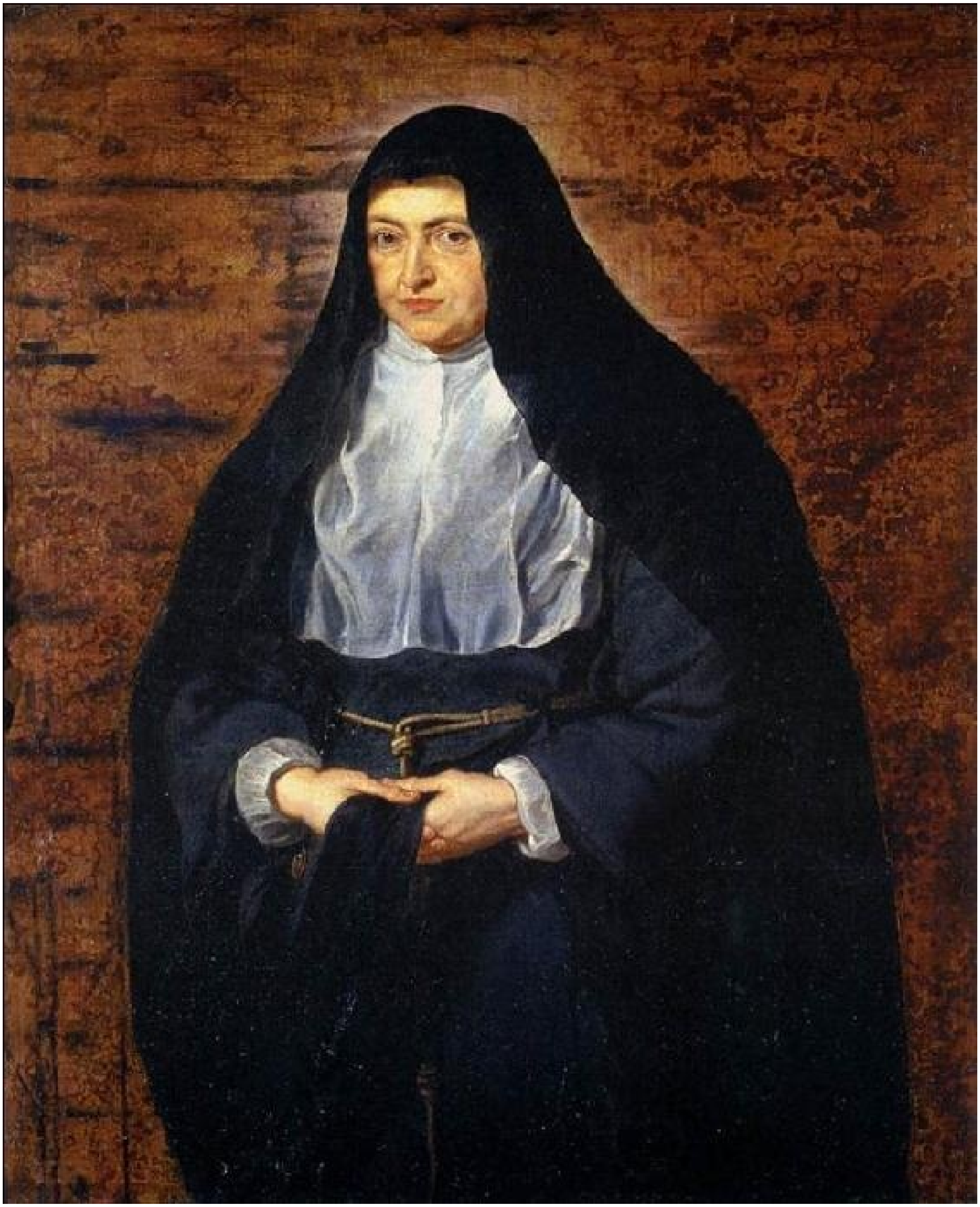
Miracles of St. Ignatius

c.1620
400 x 275 cm



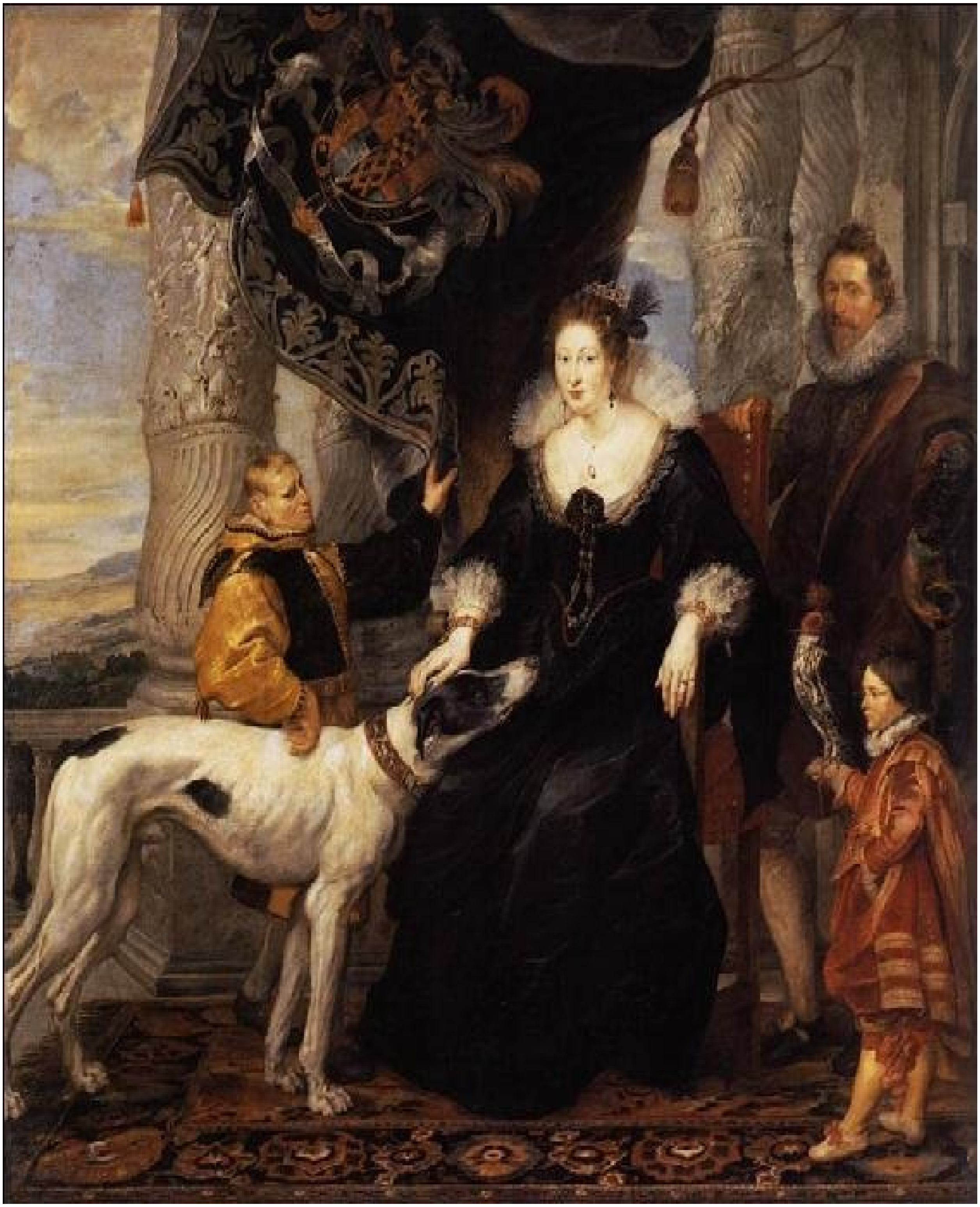
Portrait of Infanta Clara Eugenia, Governess of the Netherlands

1620
116 x 96 cm
Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy



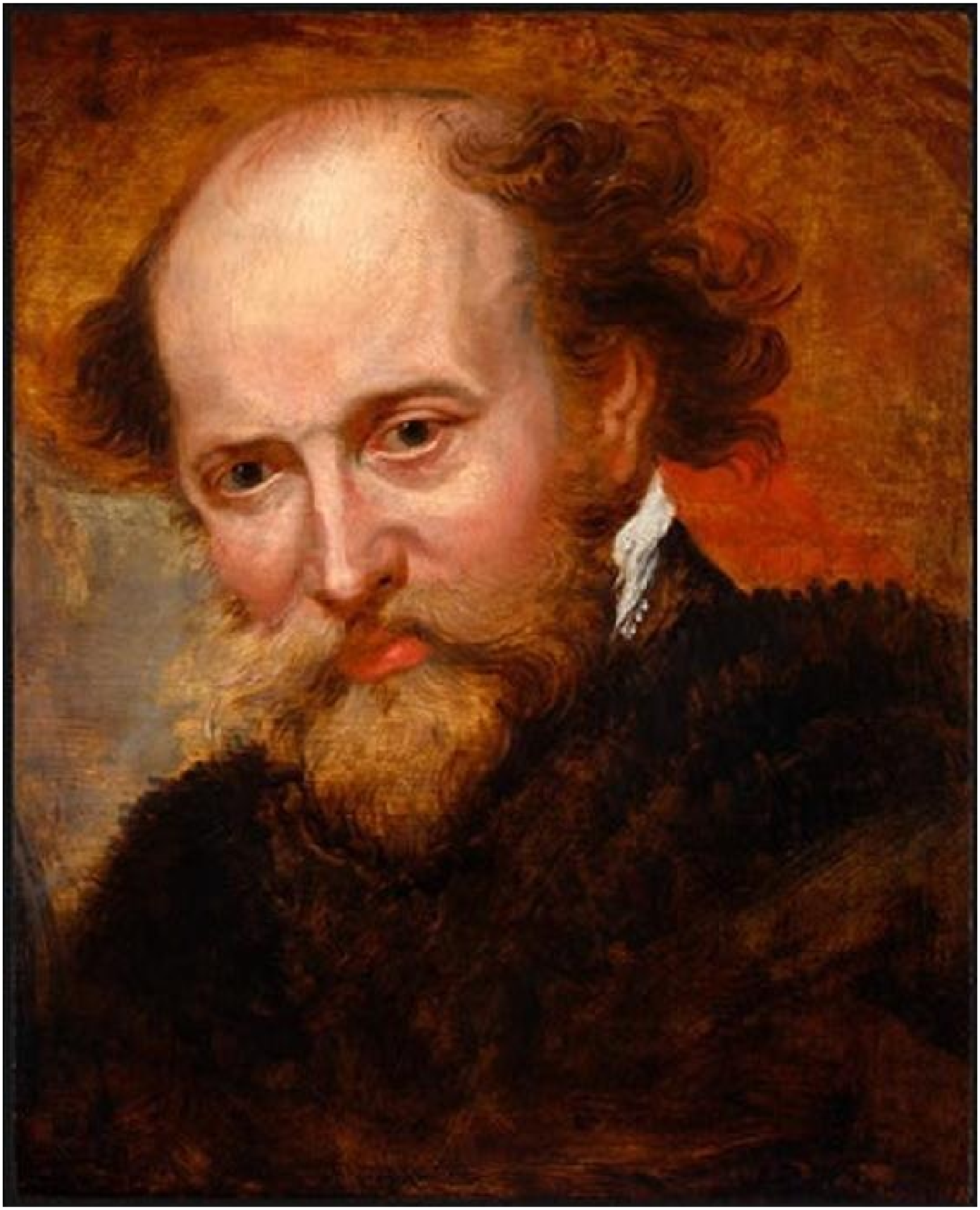
Portrait of Lady Arundel with her Train

1620
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



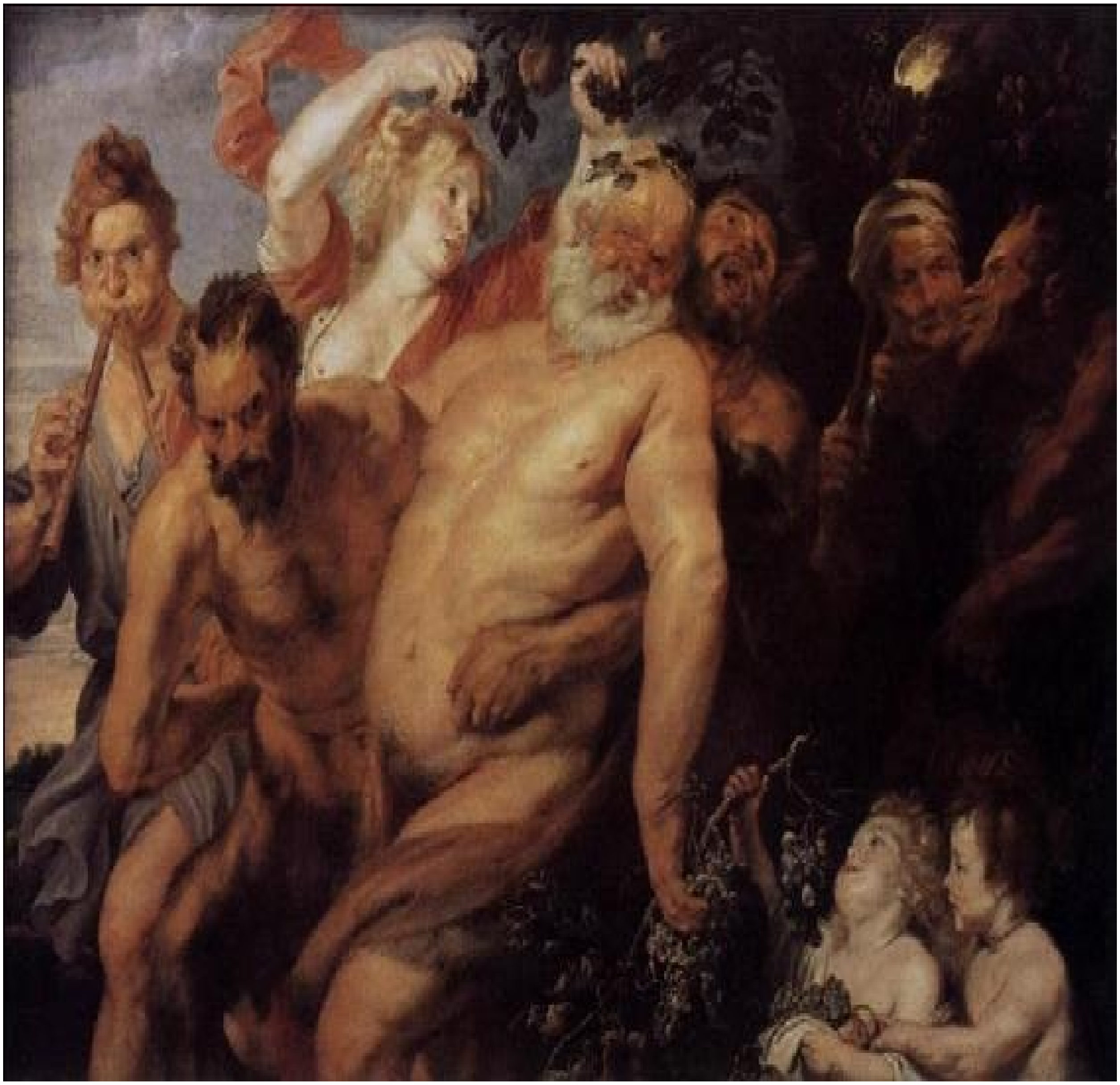
Self-Portrait

c.1620
41 x 34 cm



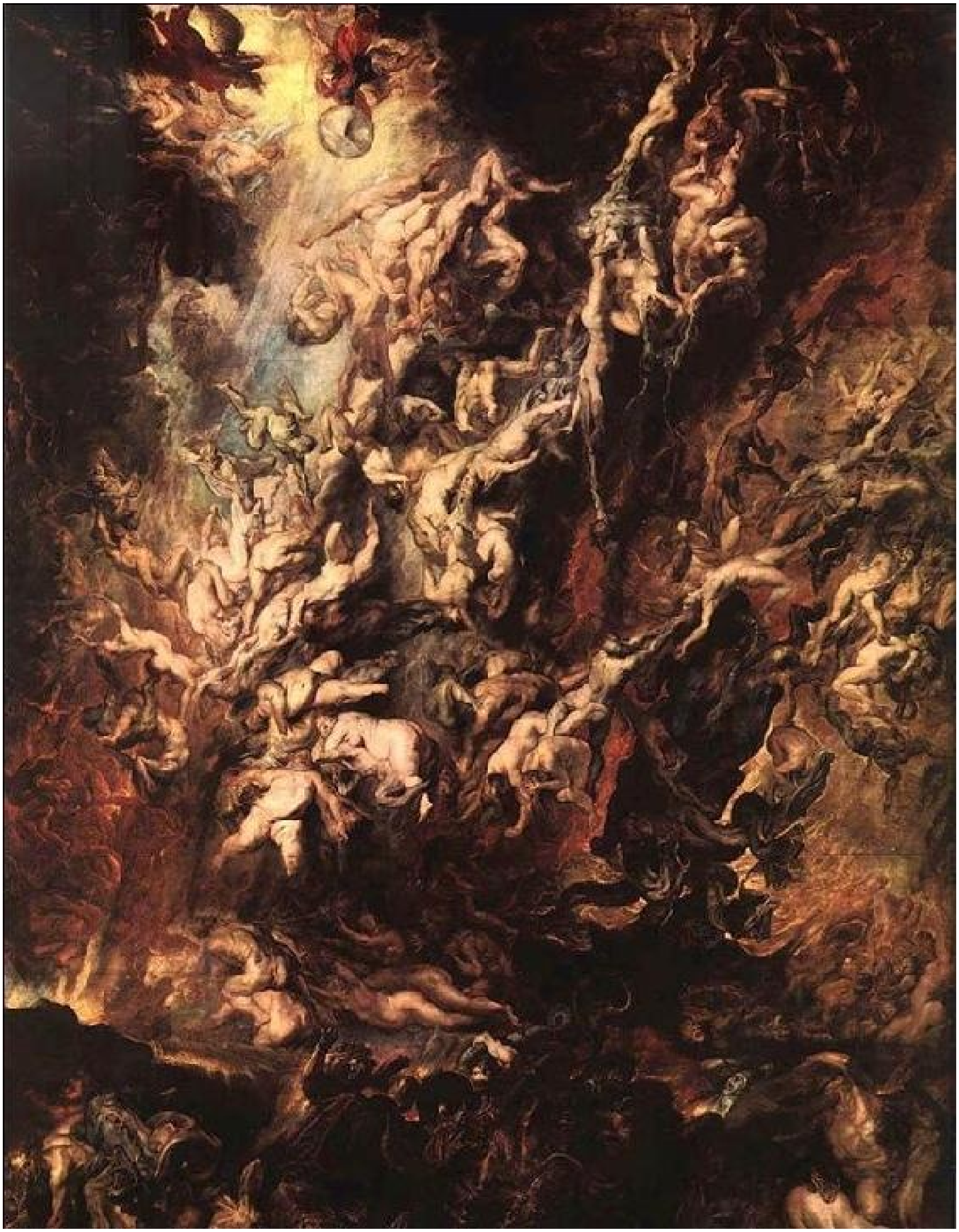
The Drunken Silenus

c.1620
133 x 197 cm
National Gallery, London



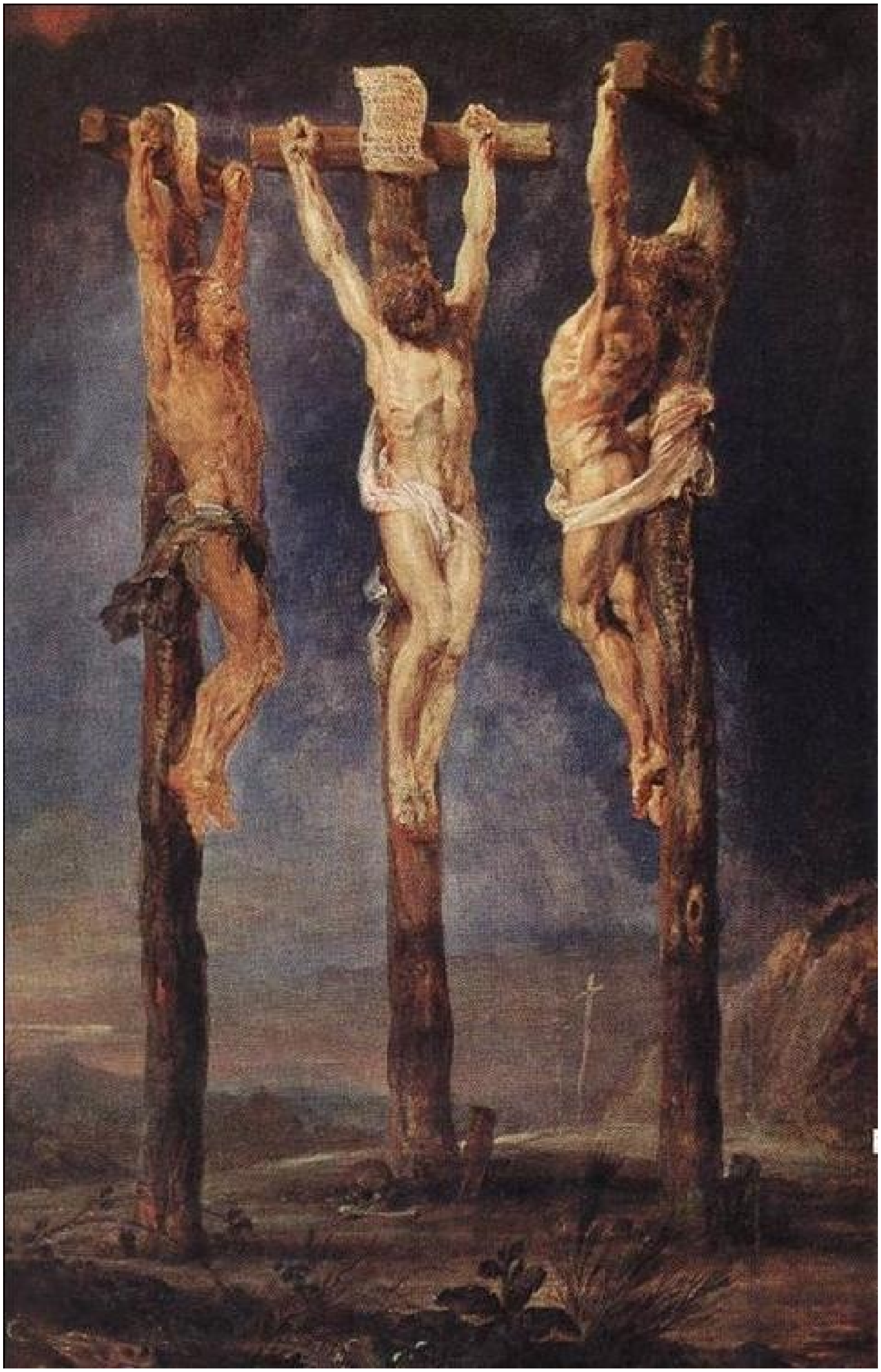
The Fall of the Damned

c.1620
286 x 224 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



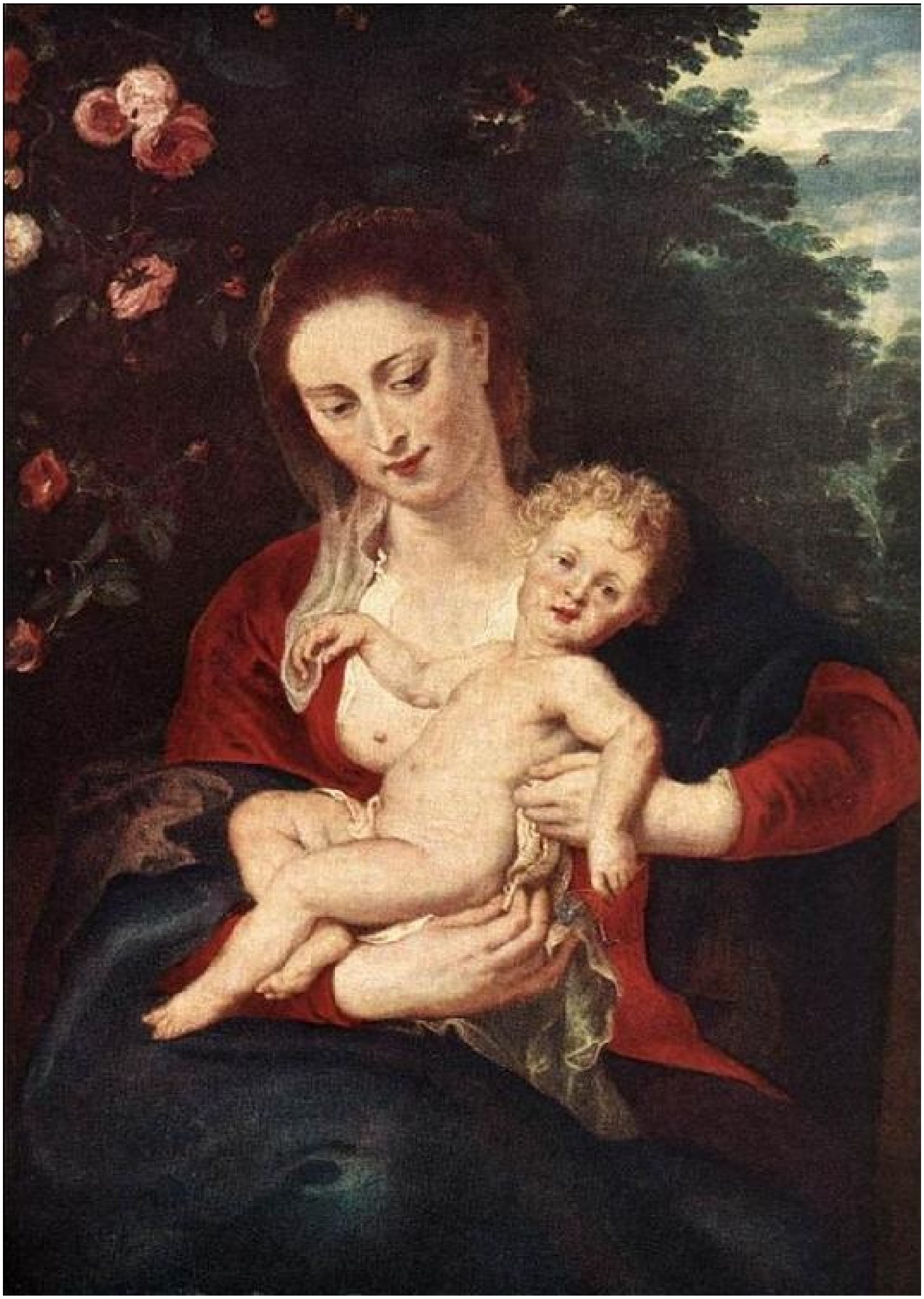
The Three Crosses

c.1620
Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



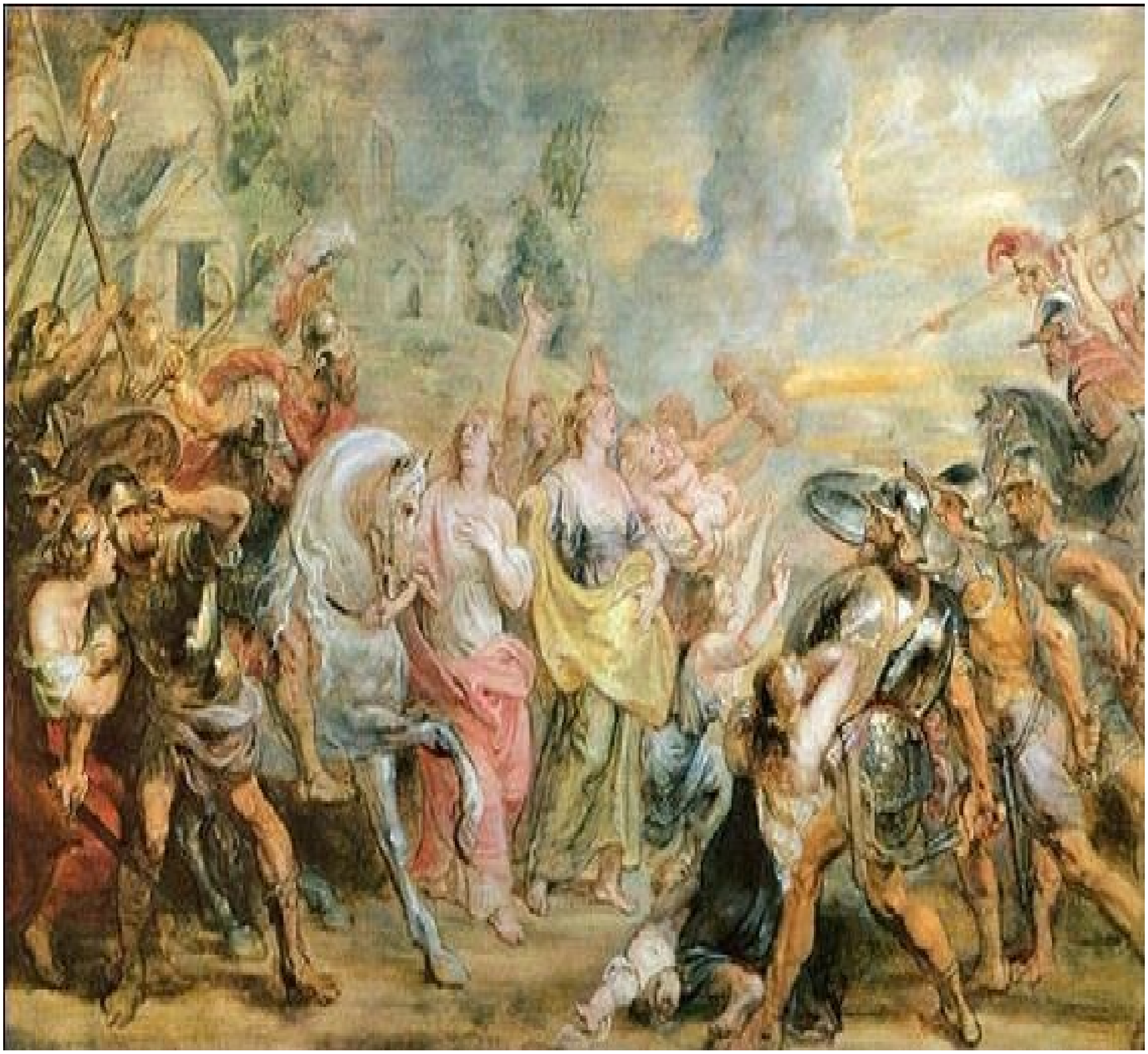
Virgin and Child

1620
65 x 48 cm
Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium



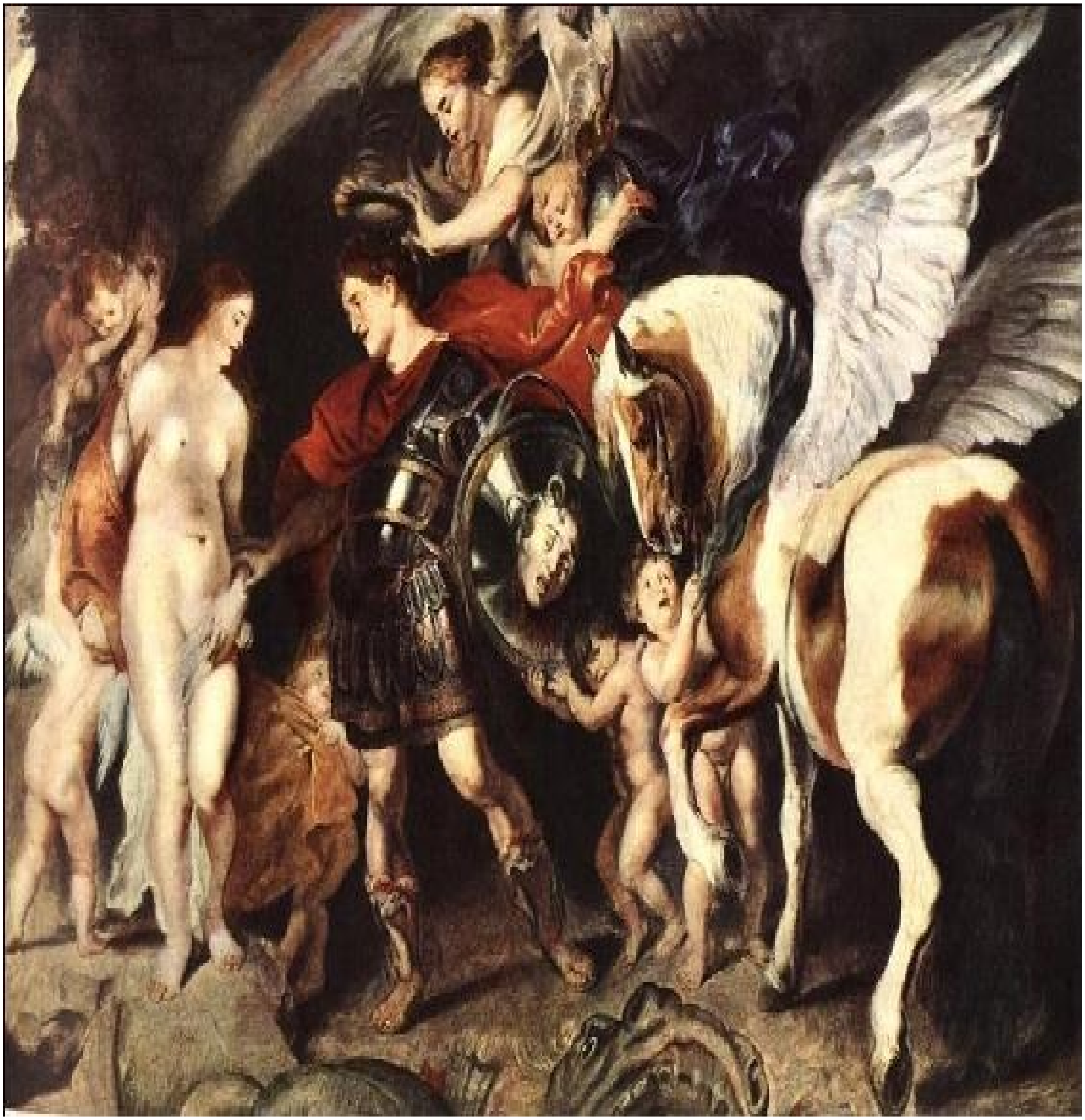
Truce between Romans and Sabinians

c.1621
Private collection



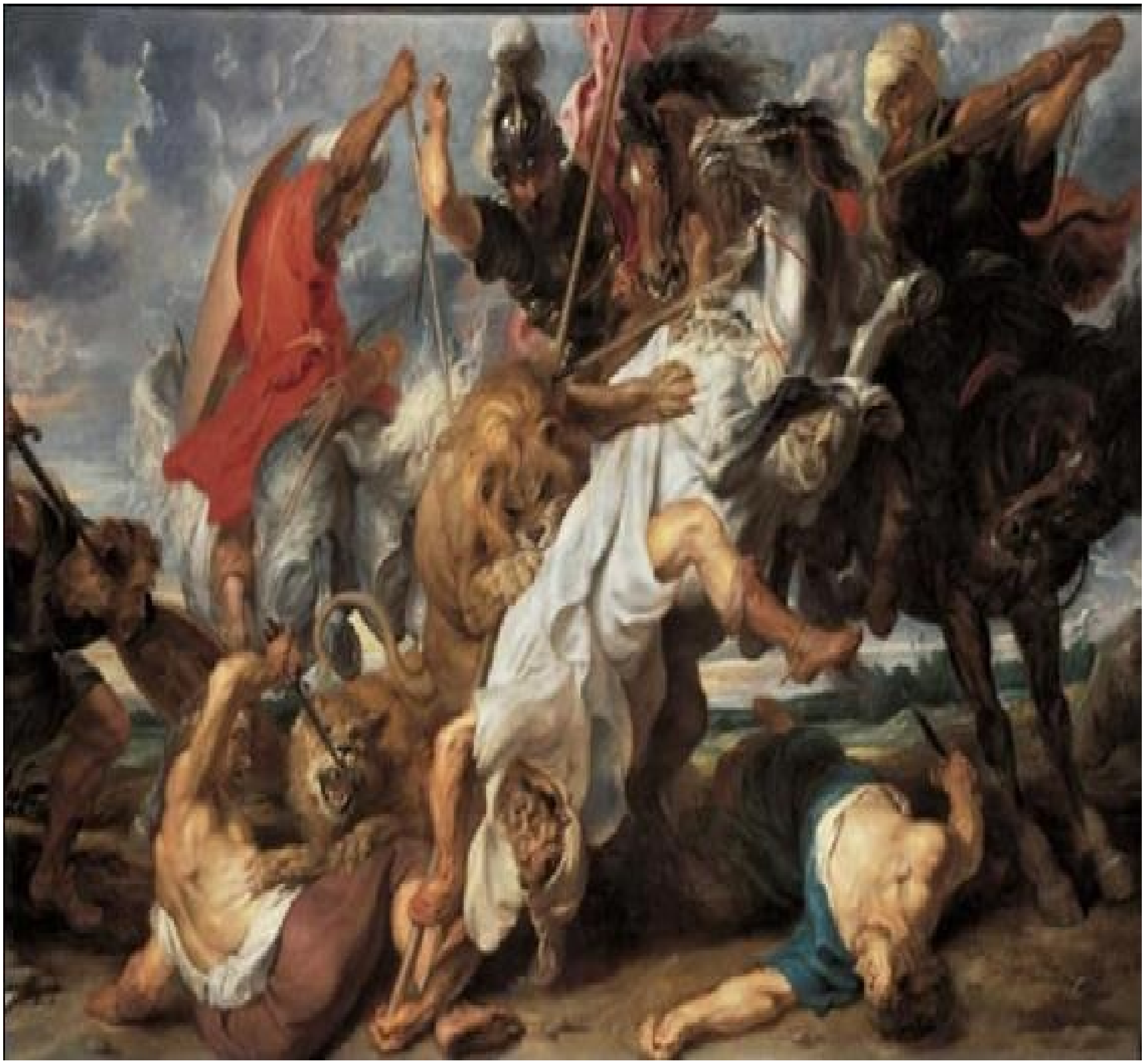
Perseus and Andromeda

c.1621
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



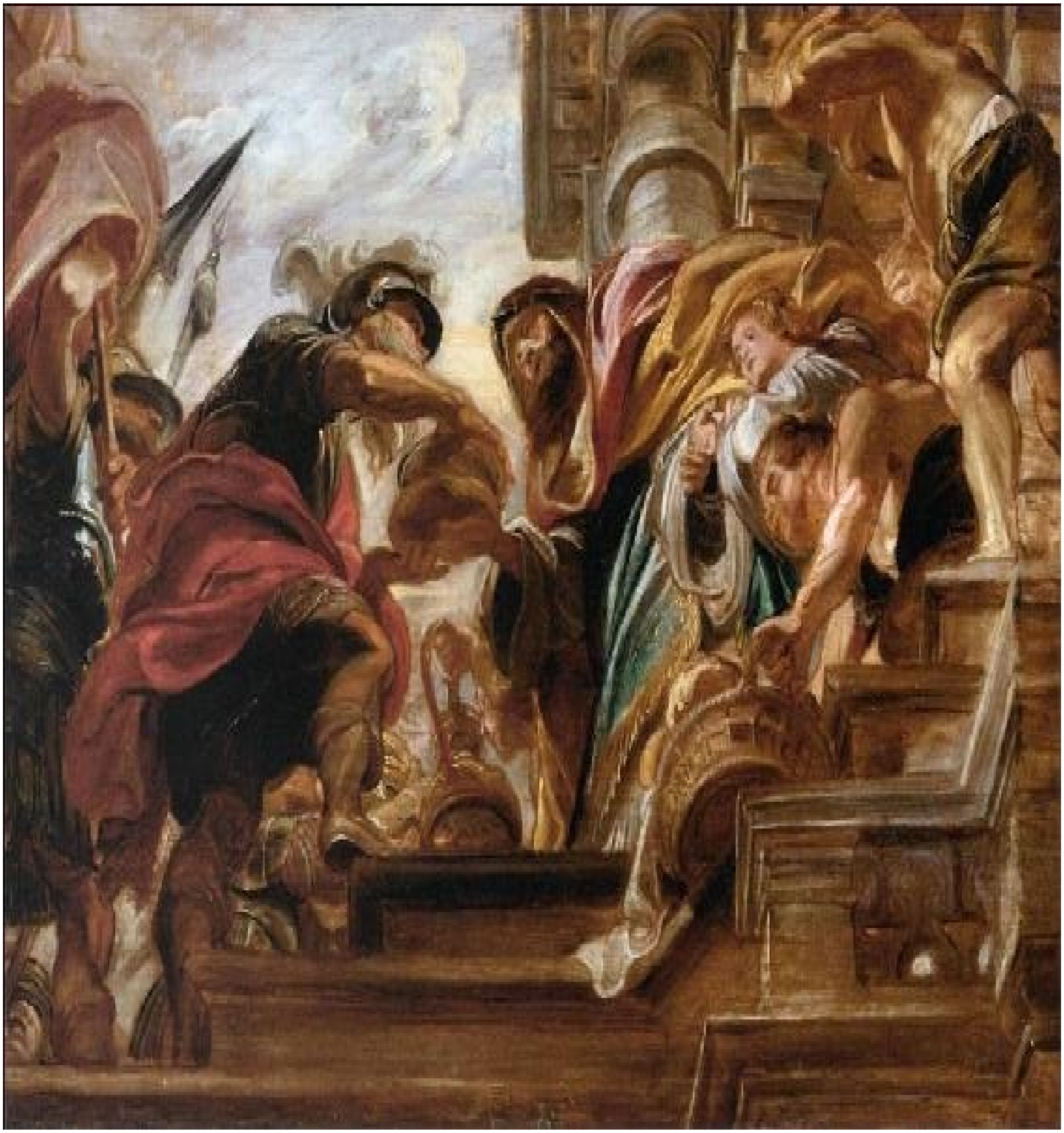
The Lion Hunt

1621
249 x 377 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



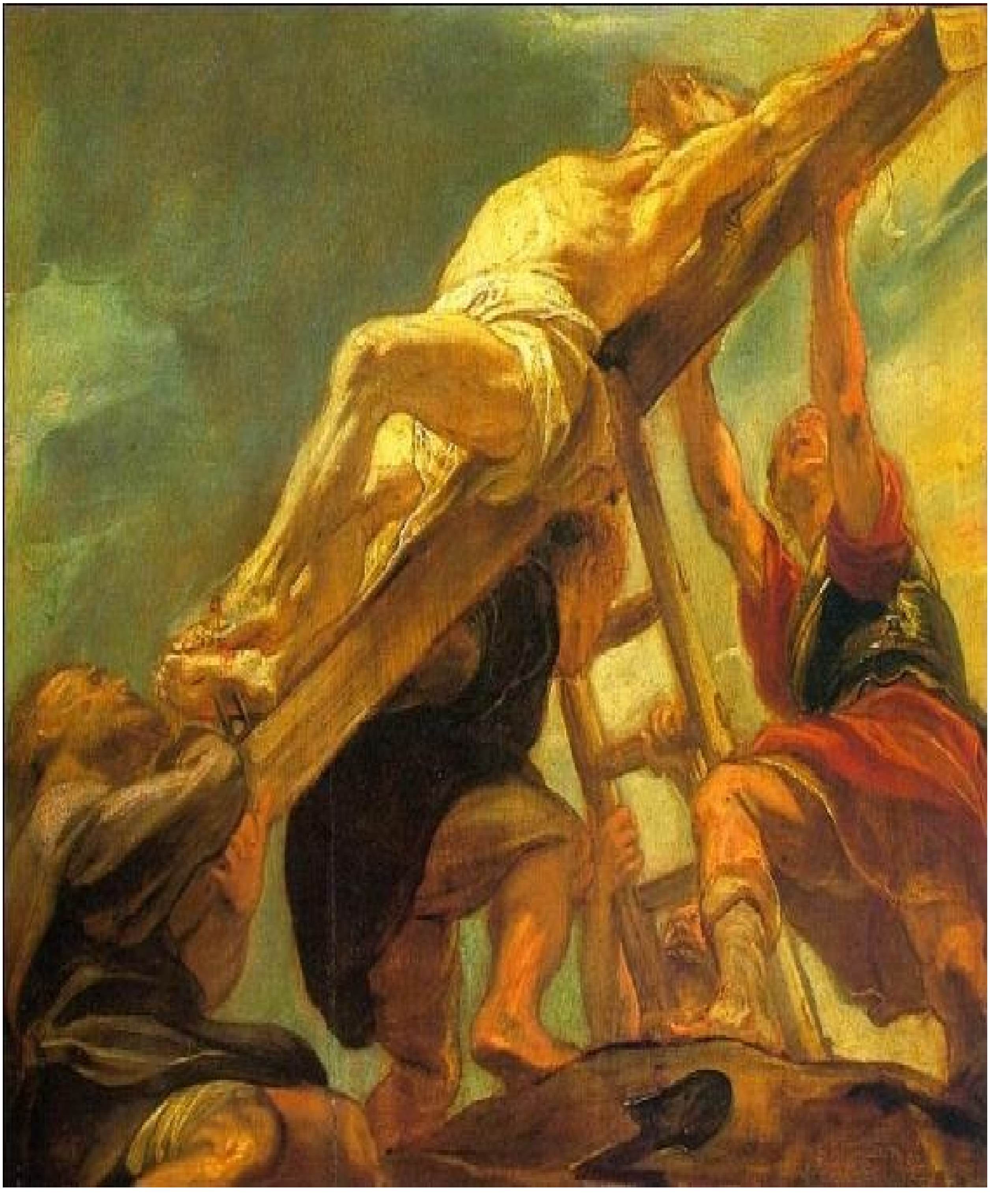
The Meeting of Abraham and Melchisedek

1621
49 x 65 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



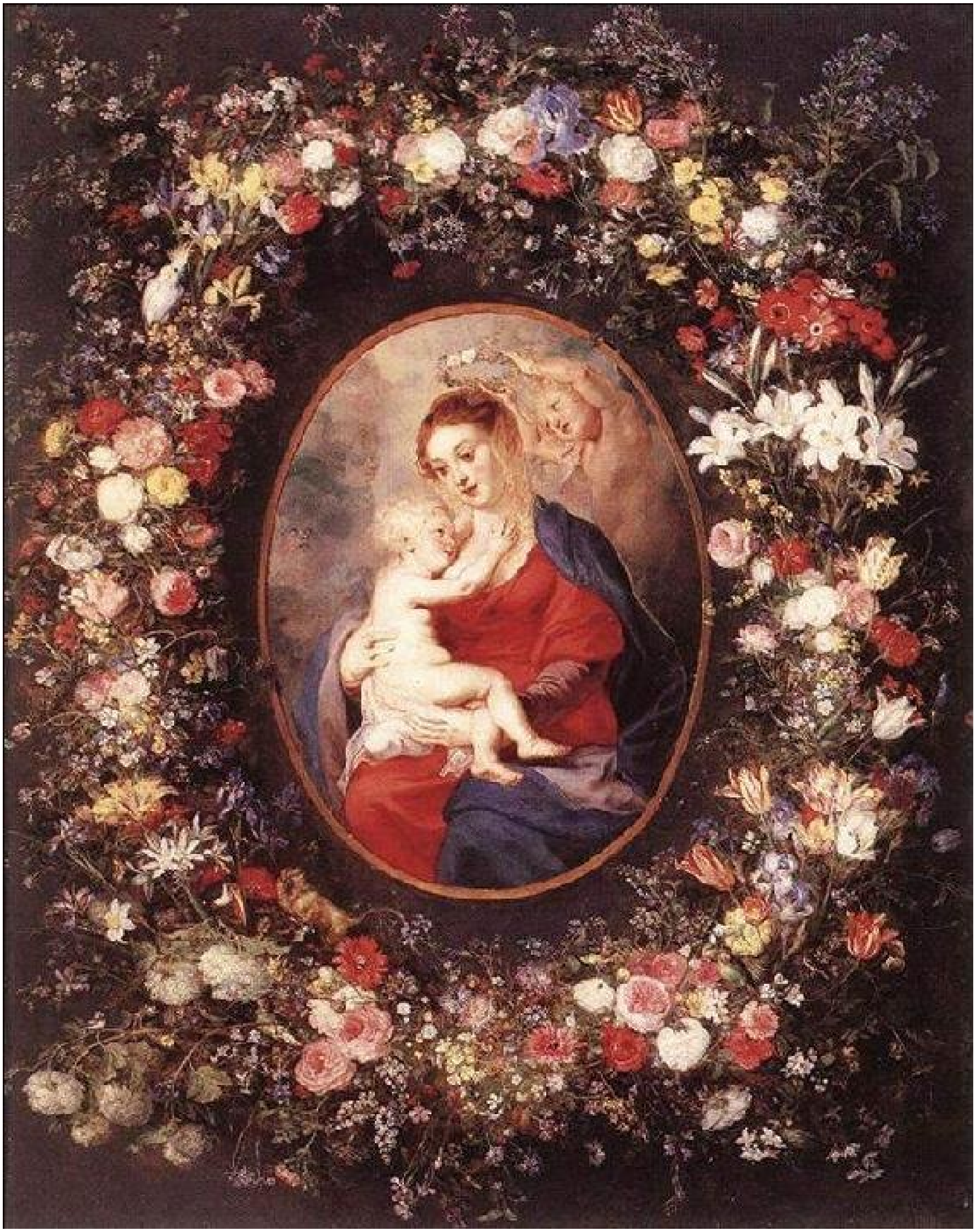
The Raising of the Cross

1621
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



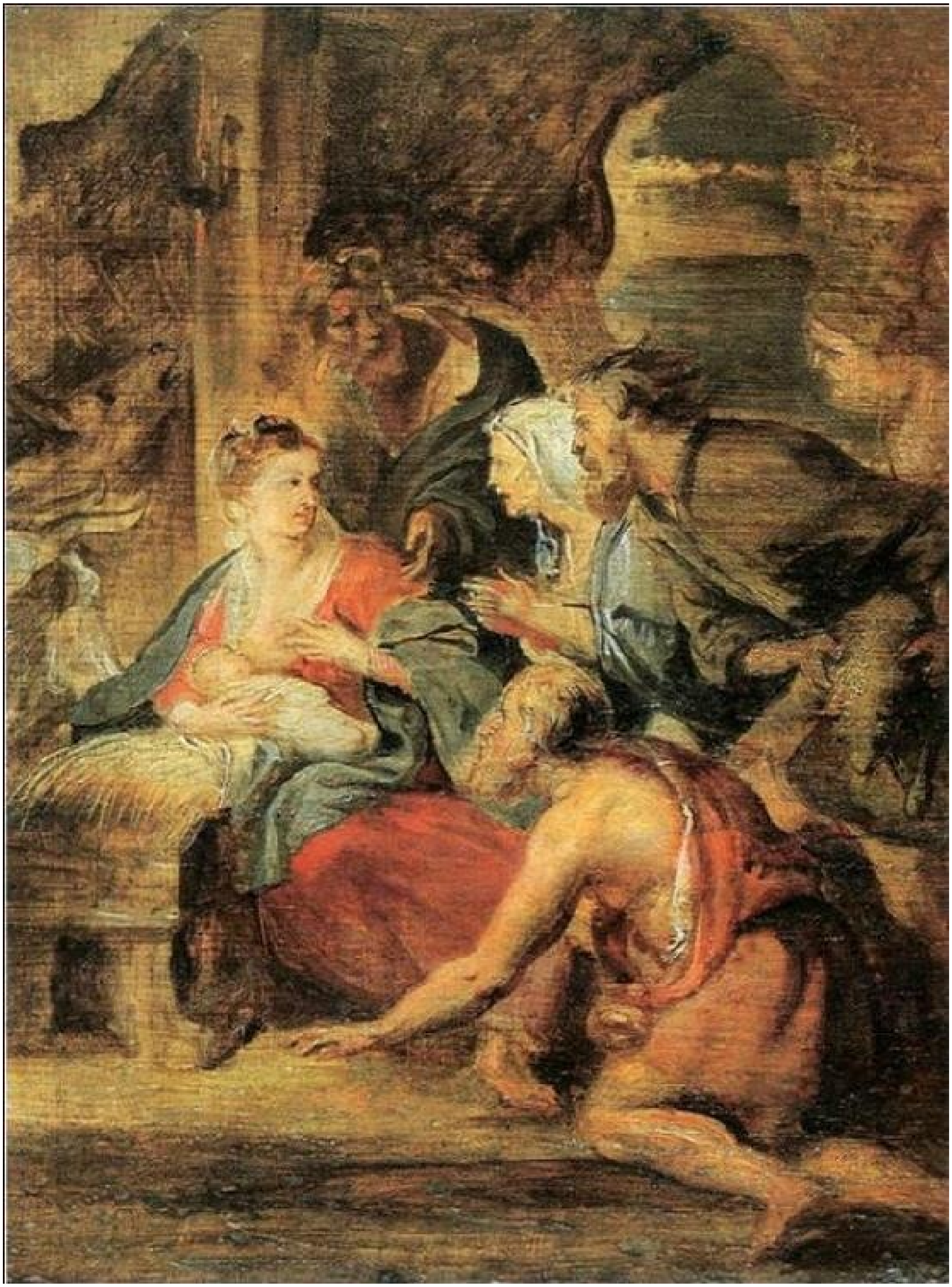
The Virgin and Child in a Garland of Flower

1621
83.5 x 65 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



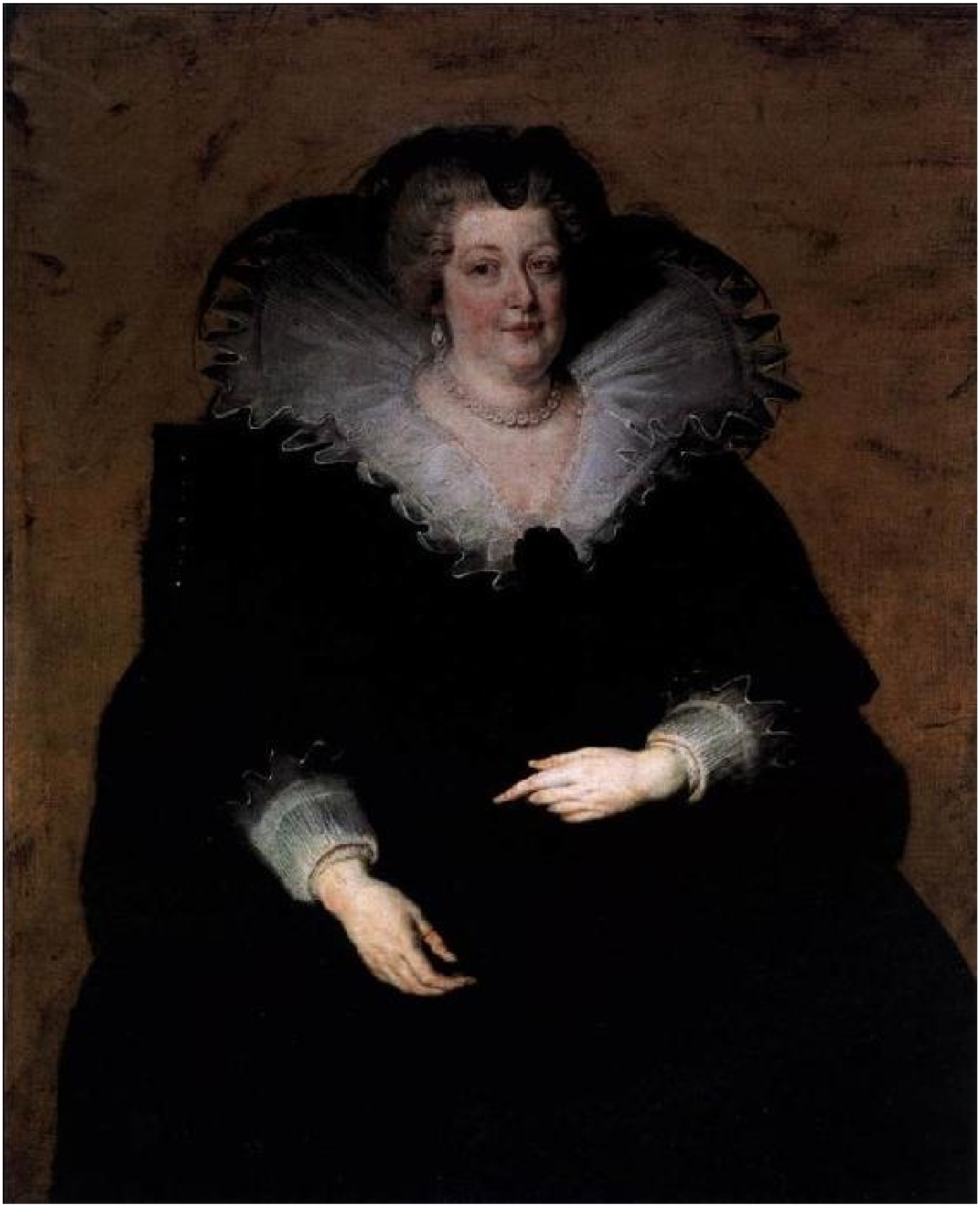
Adoration of the Shepherds

1622
29 x 23 cm



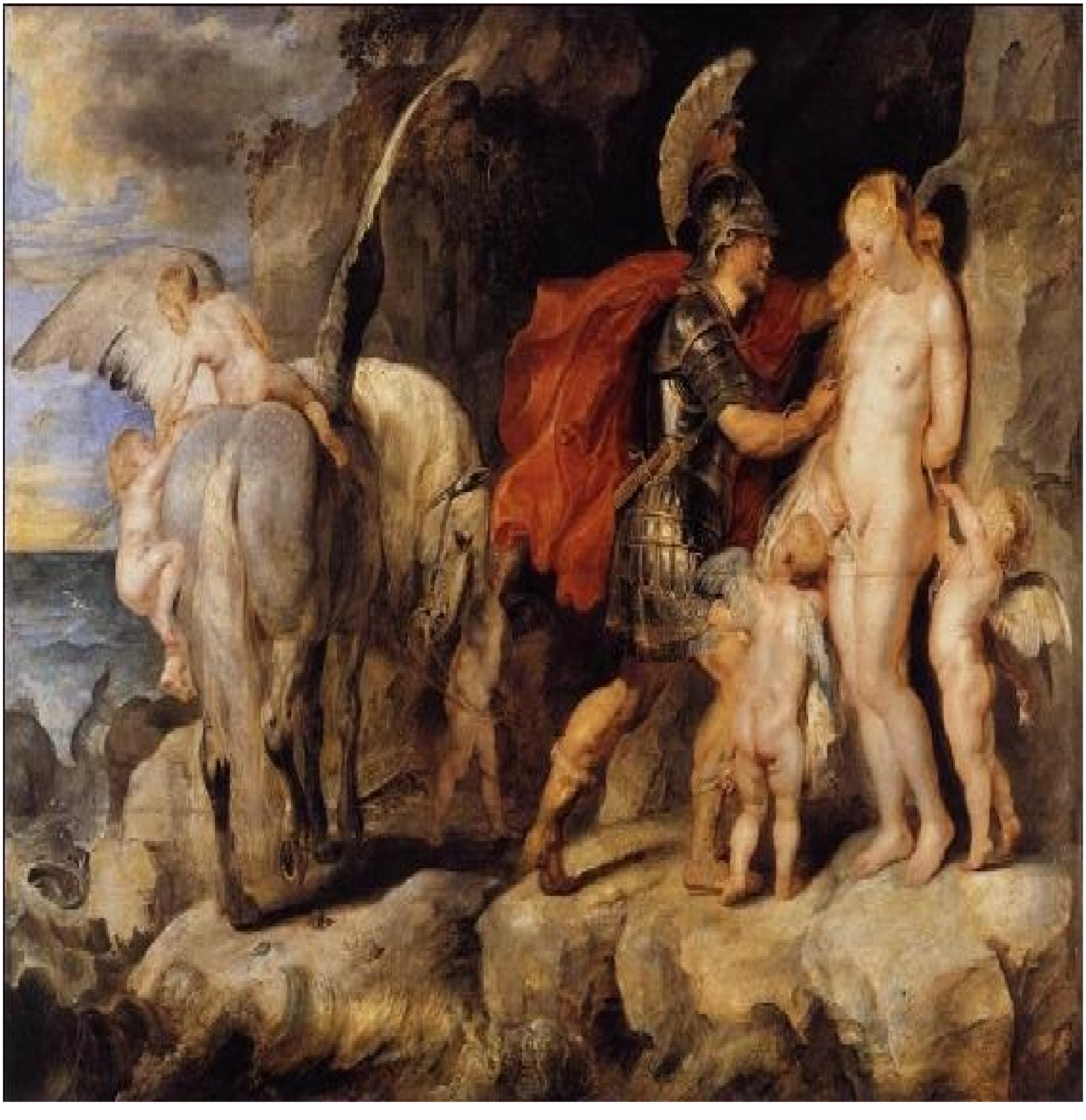
Marie de Medici

1622
130 x 108 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



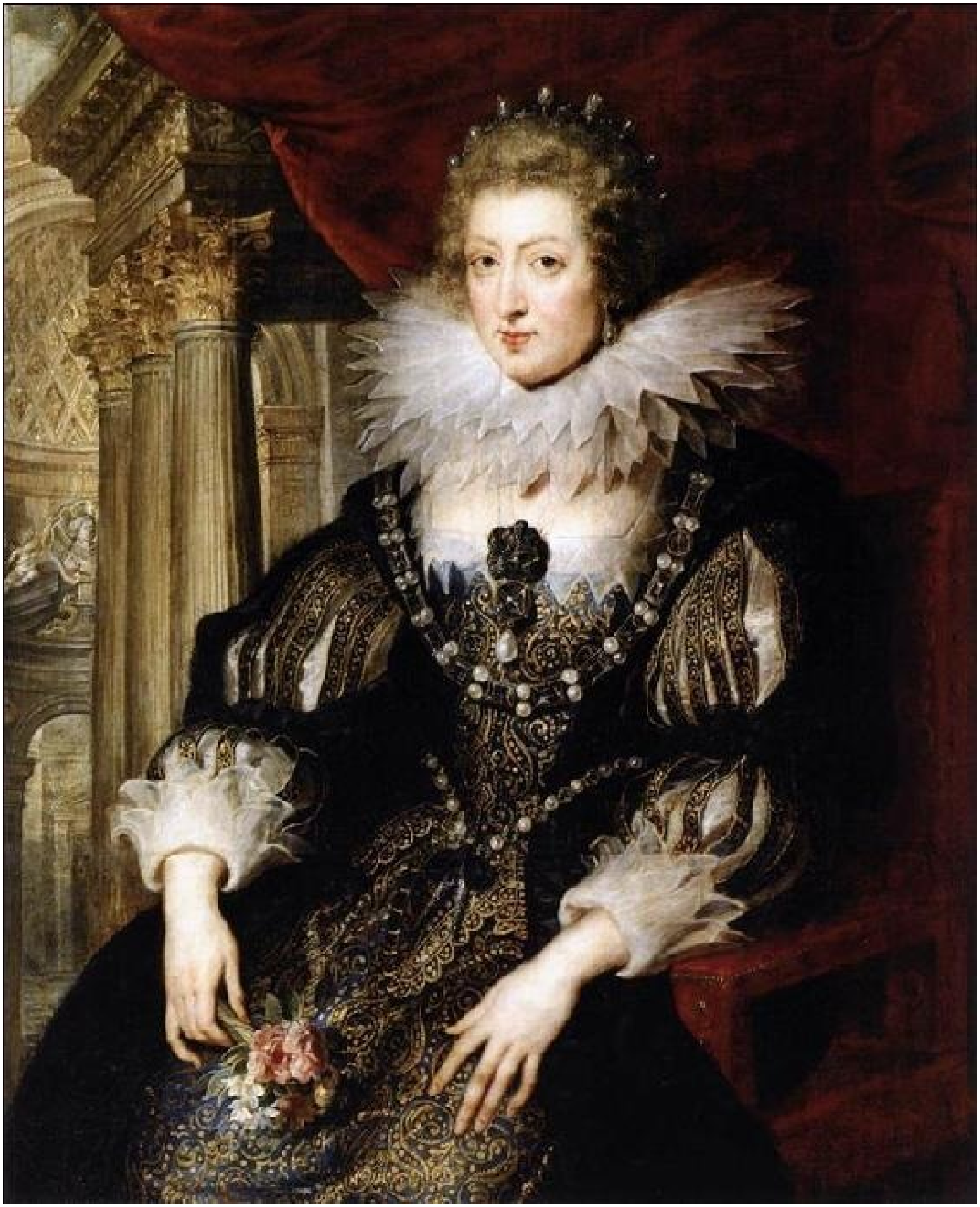
Perseus Freeing Andromeda

c.1622
100 x 139 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany



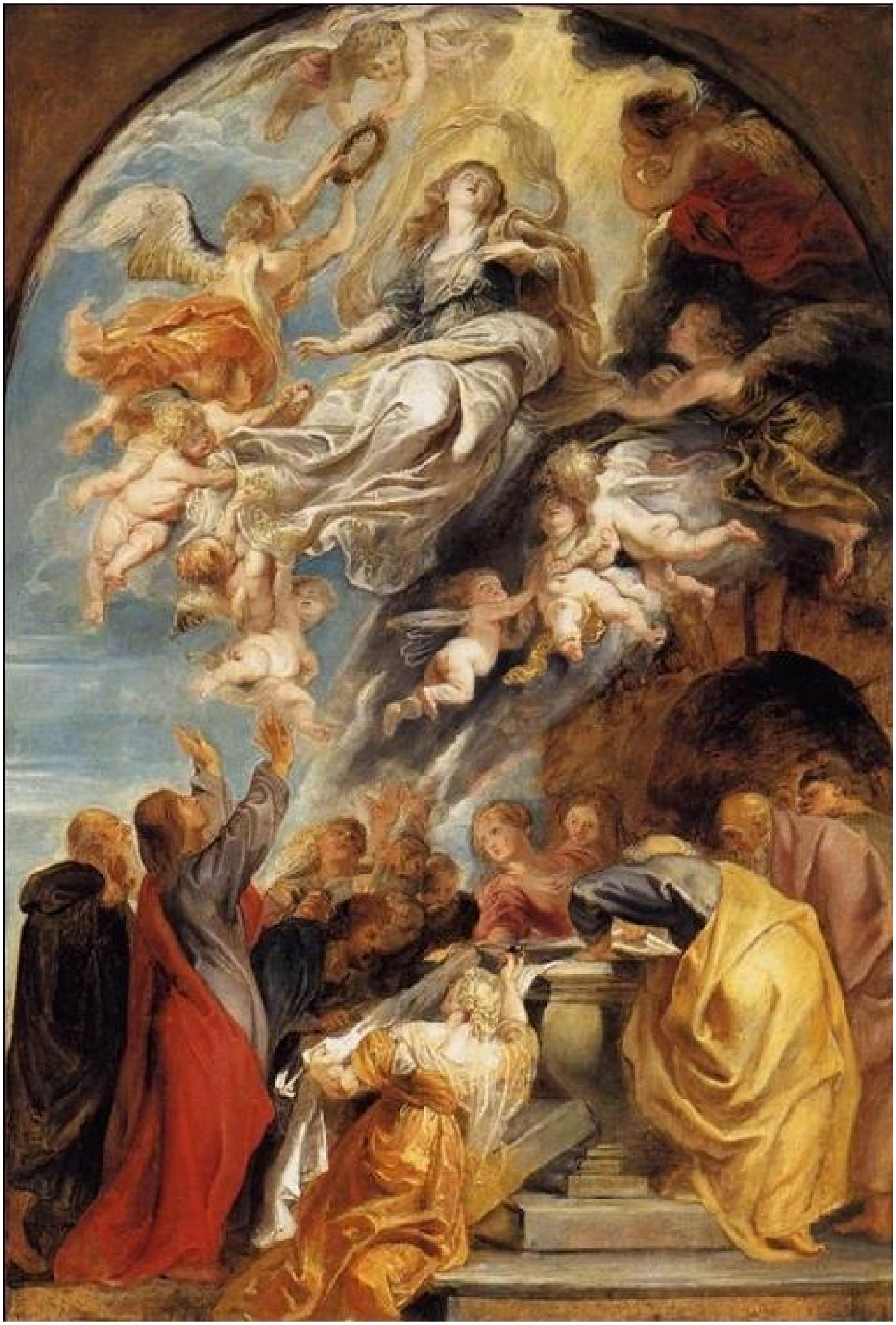
Portrait of Anne of Austria

1622
85 x 37 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



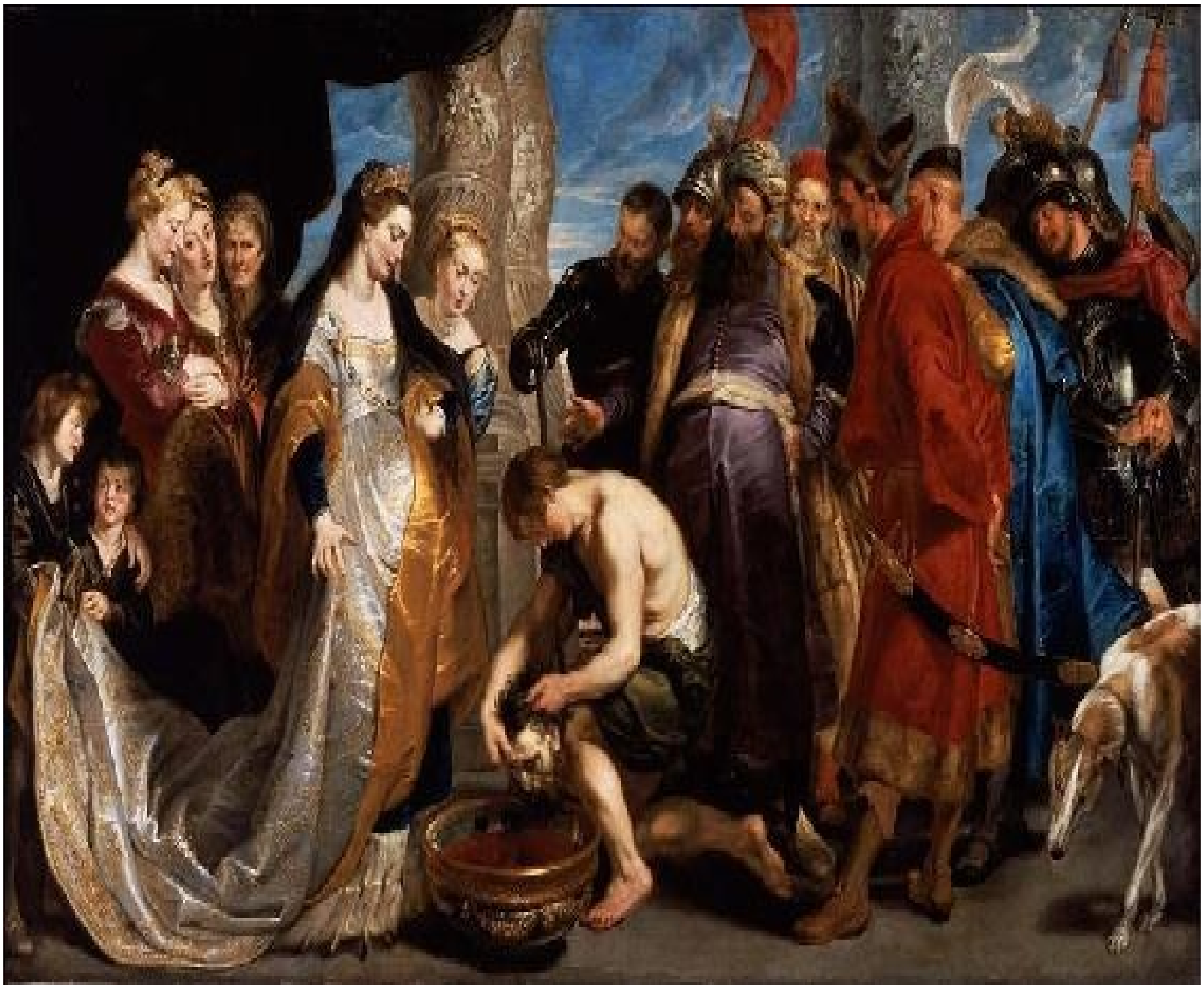
The Assumption of Mary

1622
88 x 59 cm



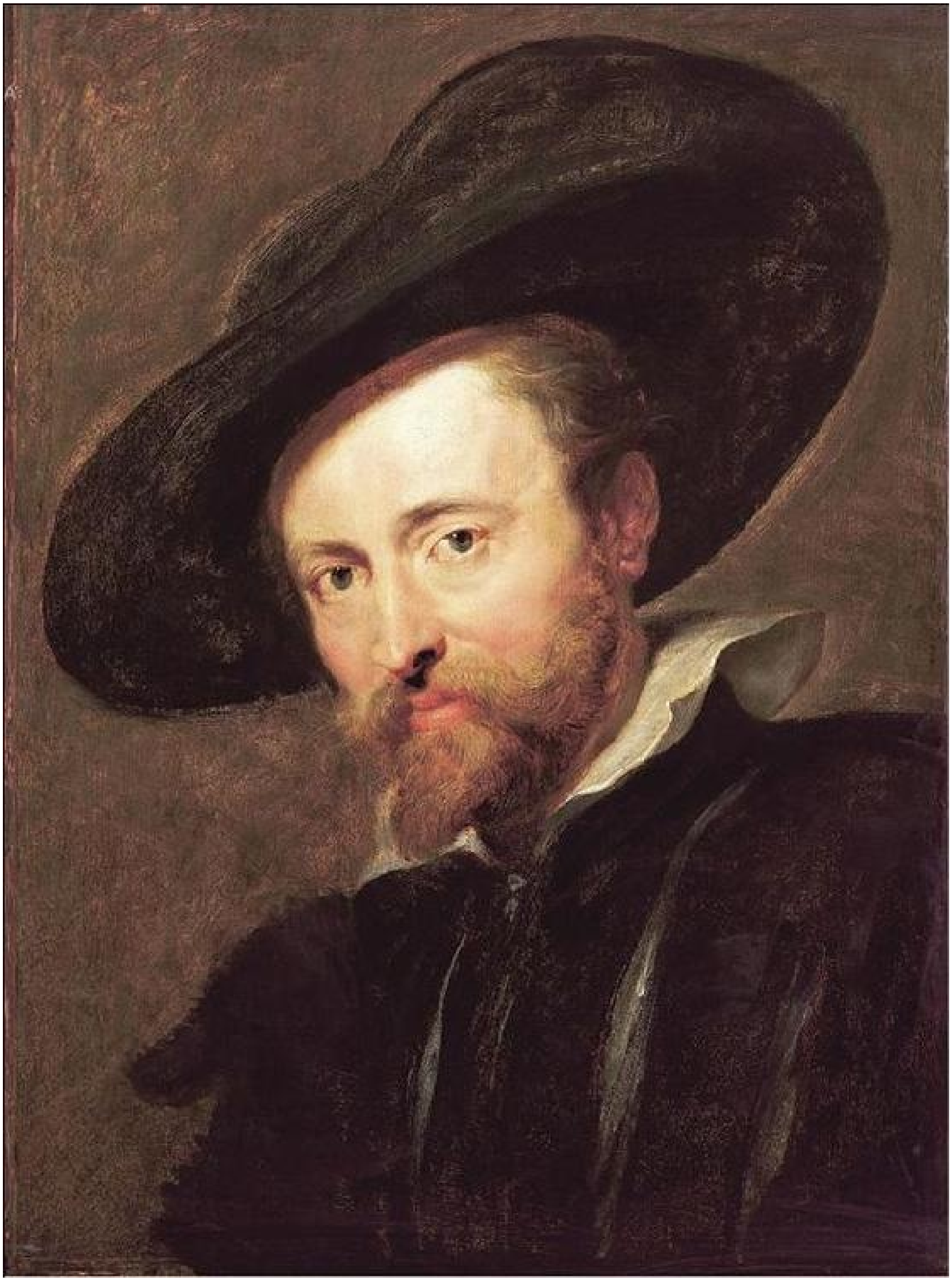
Head of Cyrus Brought to Queen Tomyris

c.1623
205 x 361 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA



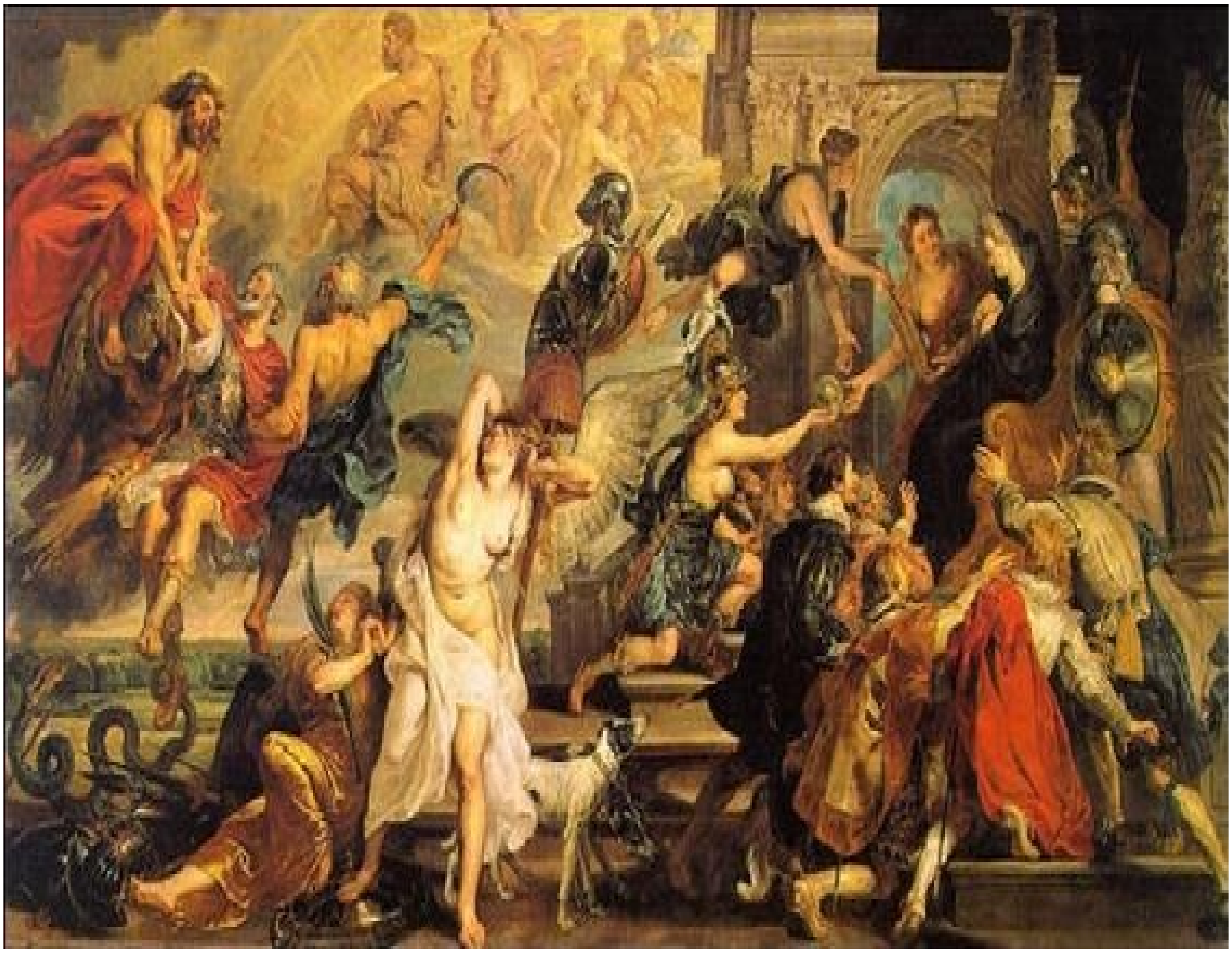
Self-Portrait

1623
61 x 45 cm



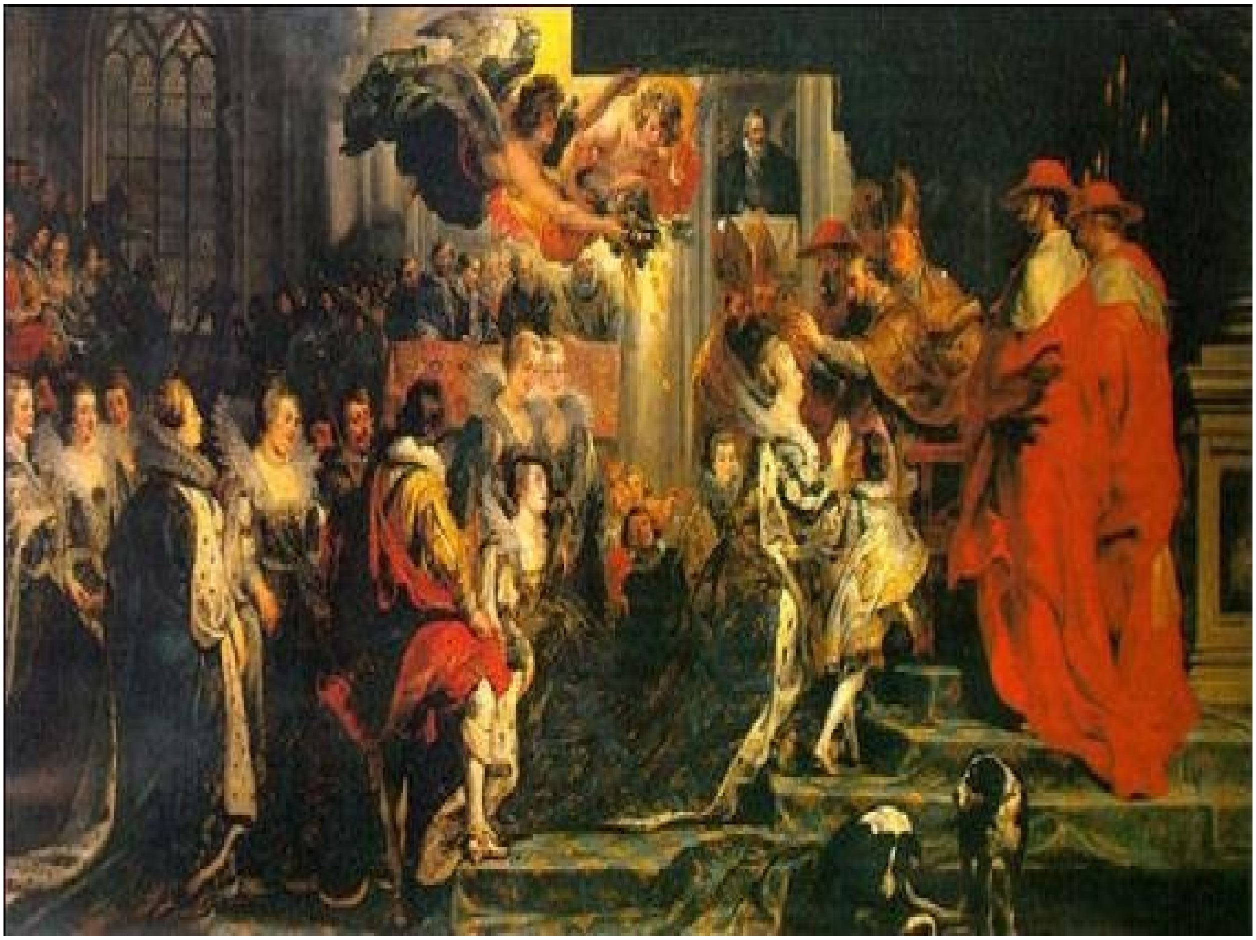
Apotheosis of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency of Marie de Medici

1624
394 x 727 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



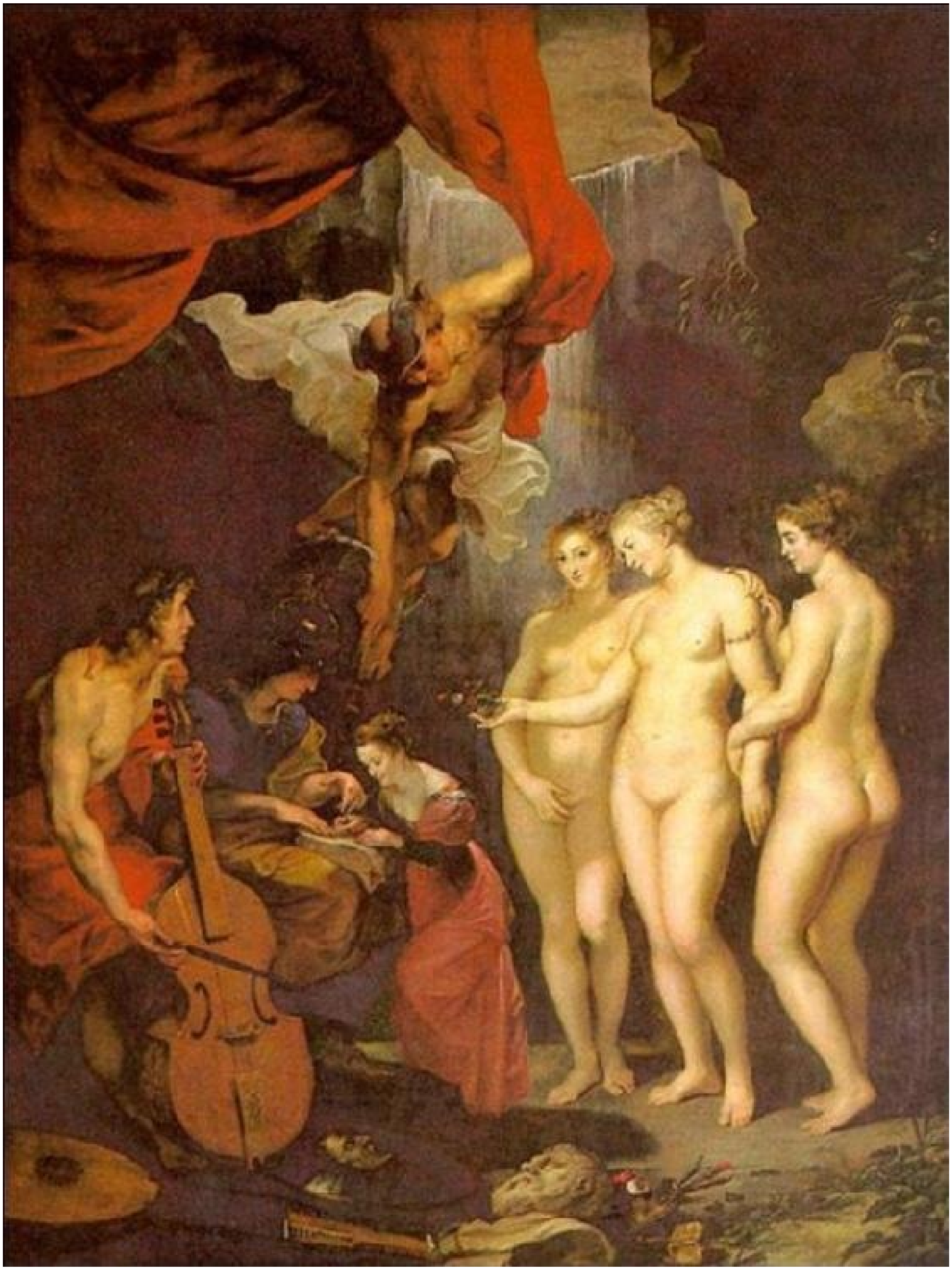
Coronation of Marie de Medici

1624
394 x 727 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



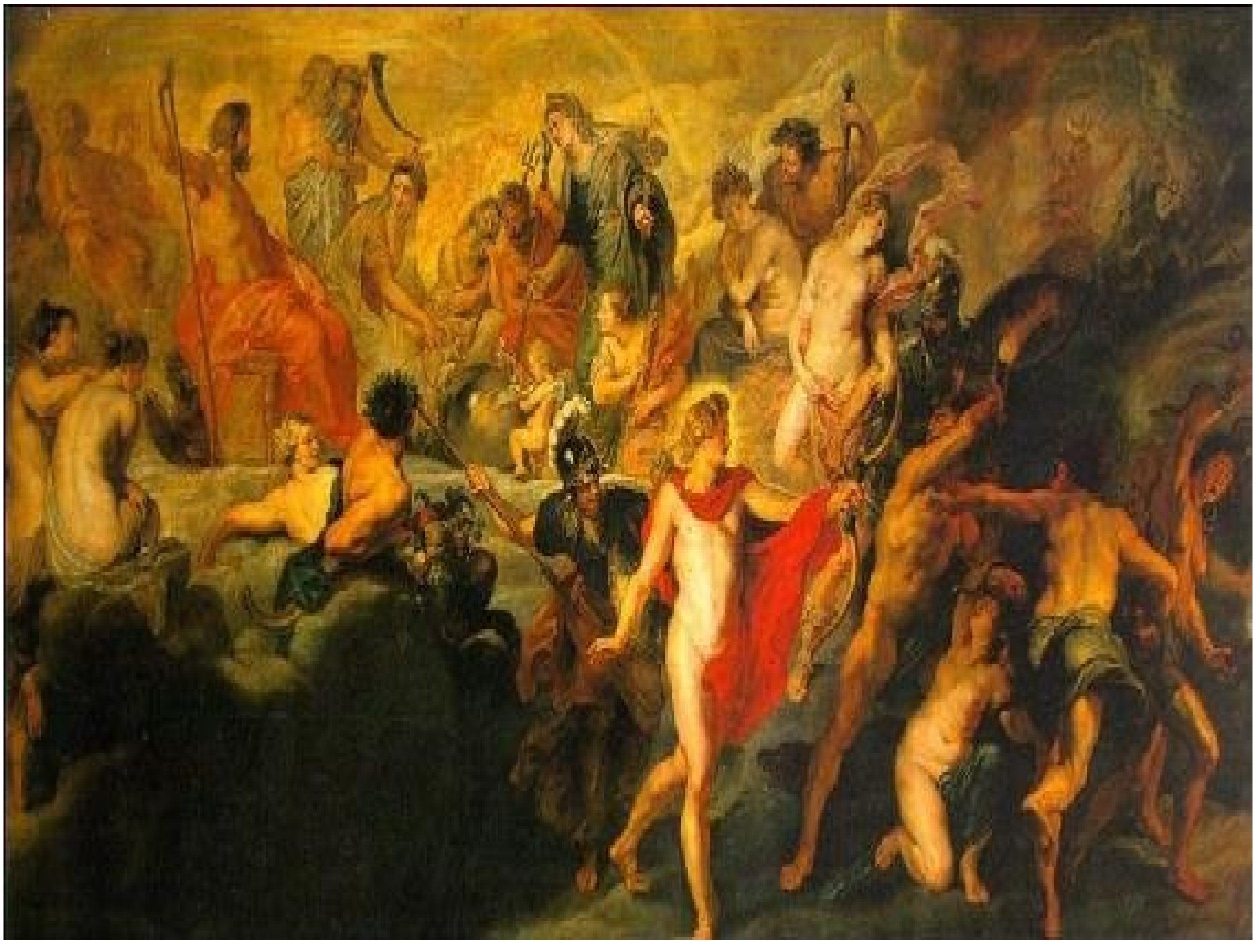
Education of Marie de Medici

1624
394 x 295 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



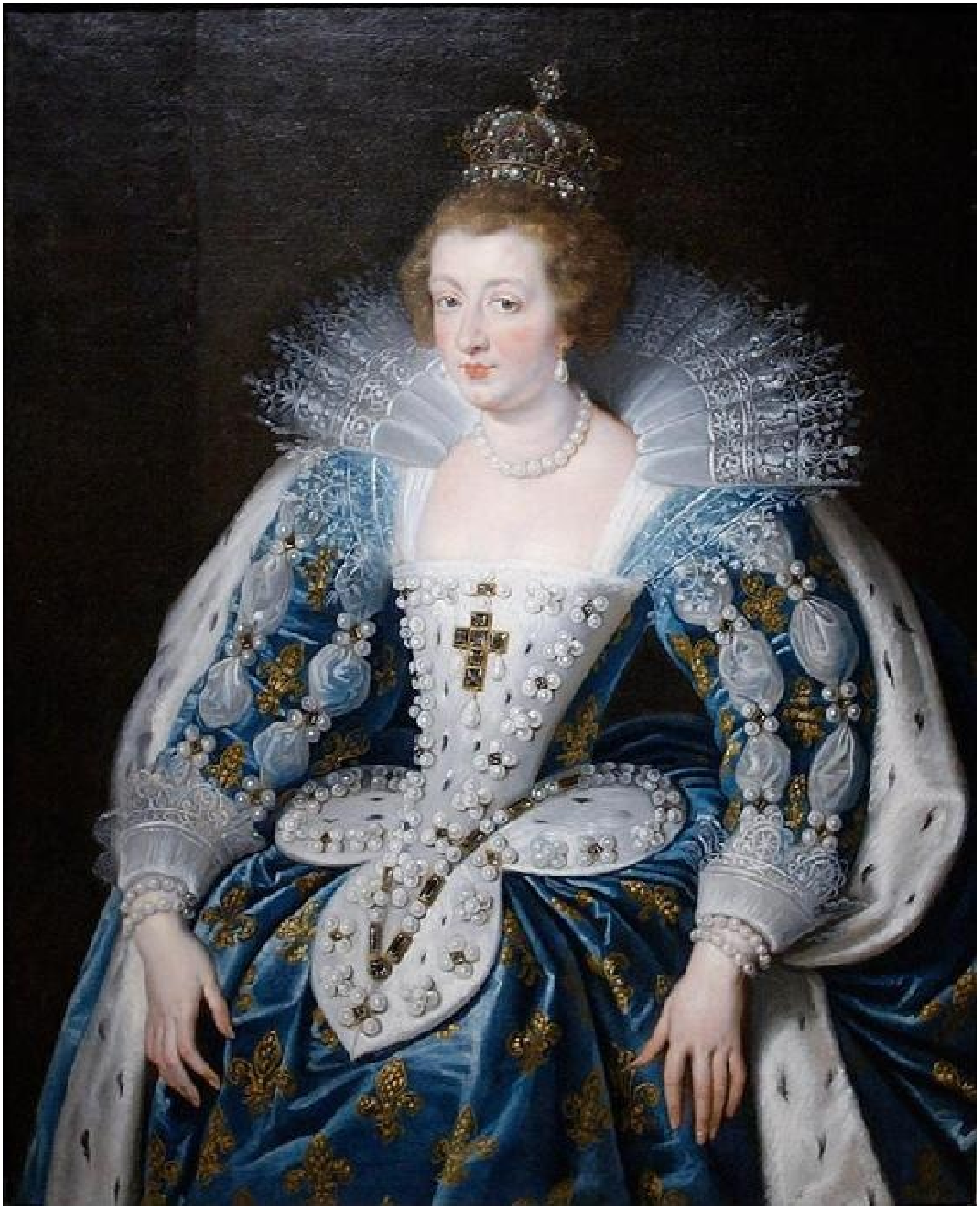
The Council of the Gods

1624
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



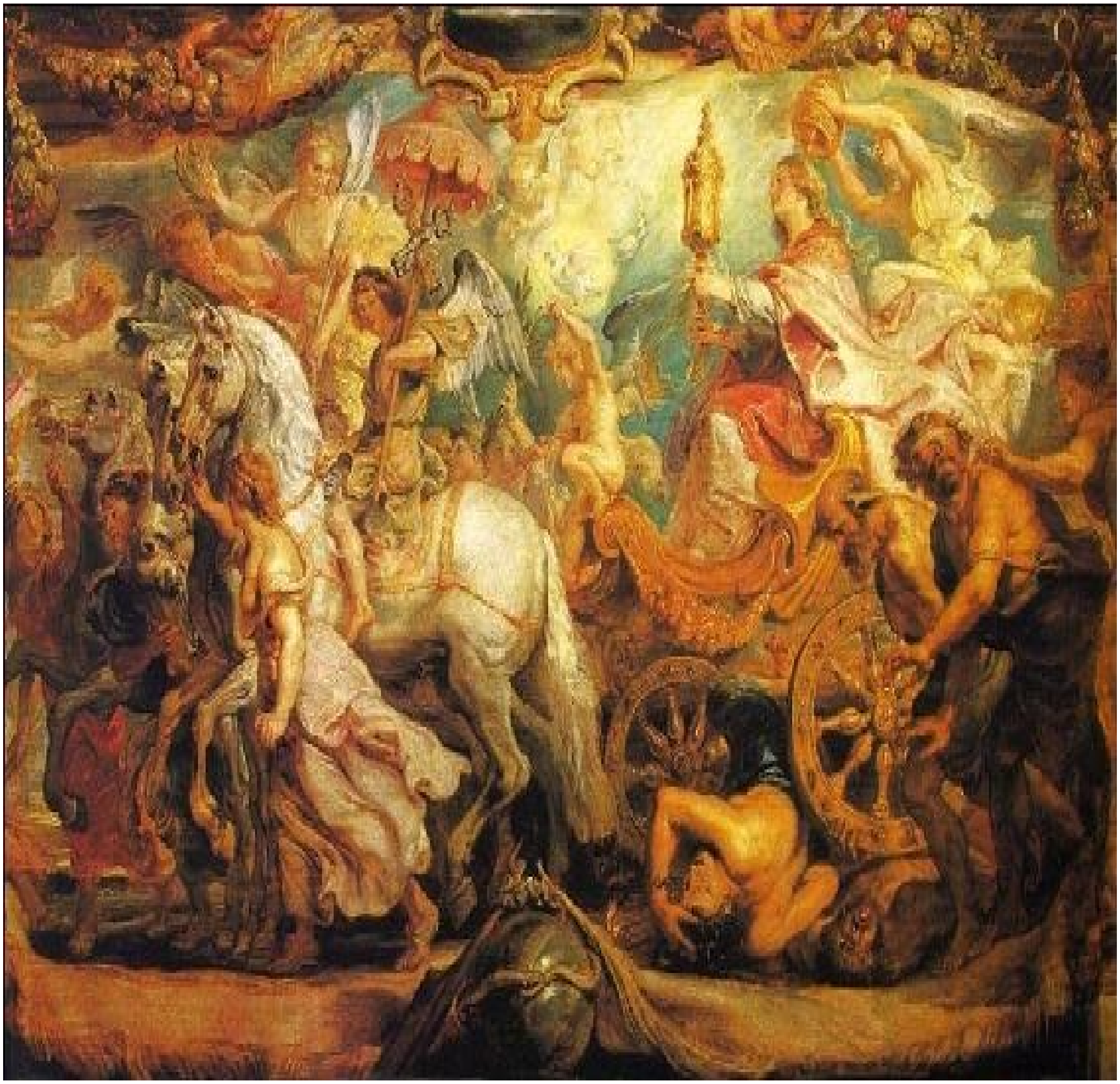
Anna of Austria, queen of France, mother of king Louis XIV

1625



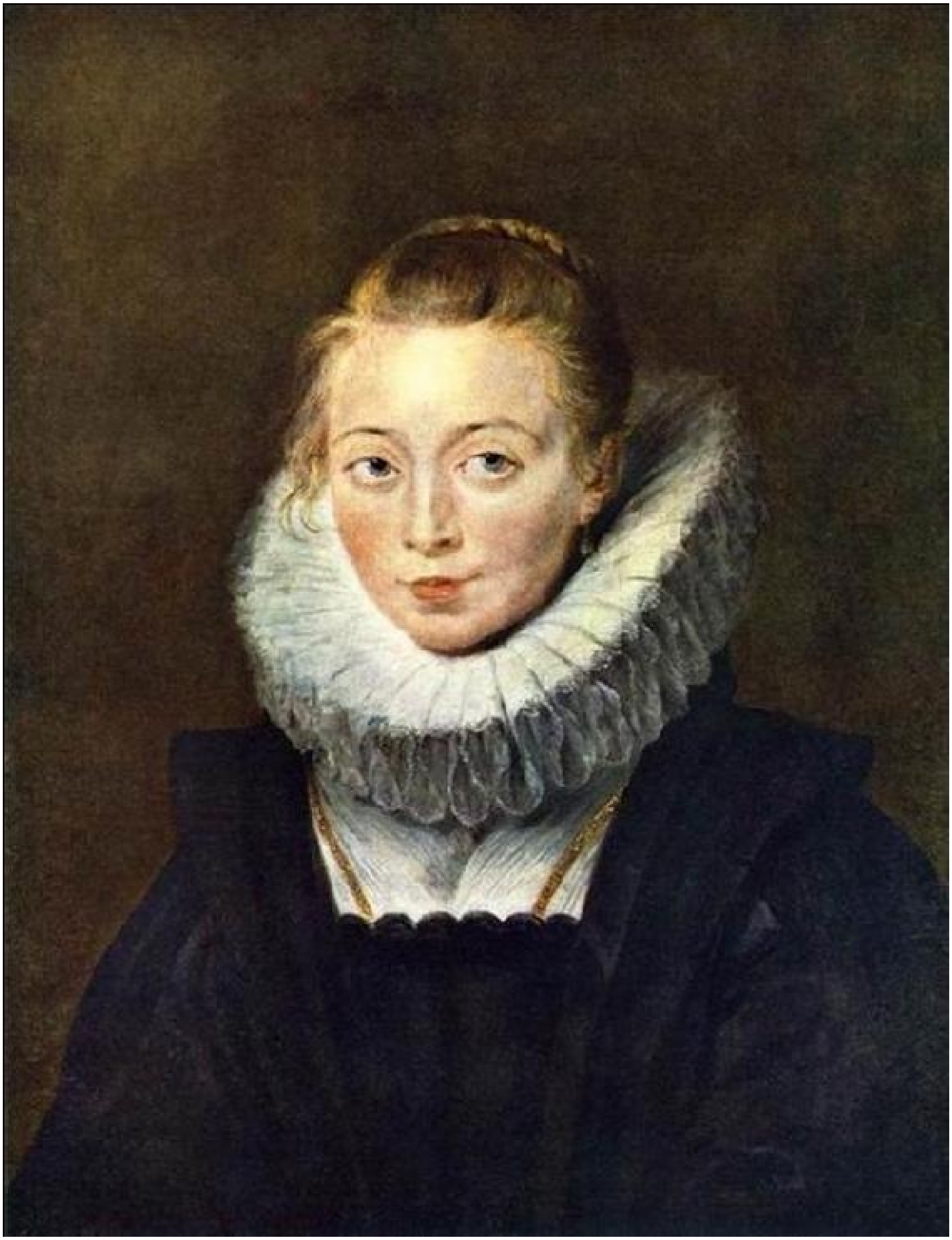
The Triumph of the Church

c.1625
Oil on canvas,
63,5 x 105 cm,
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



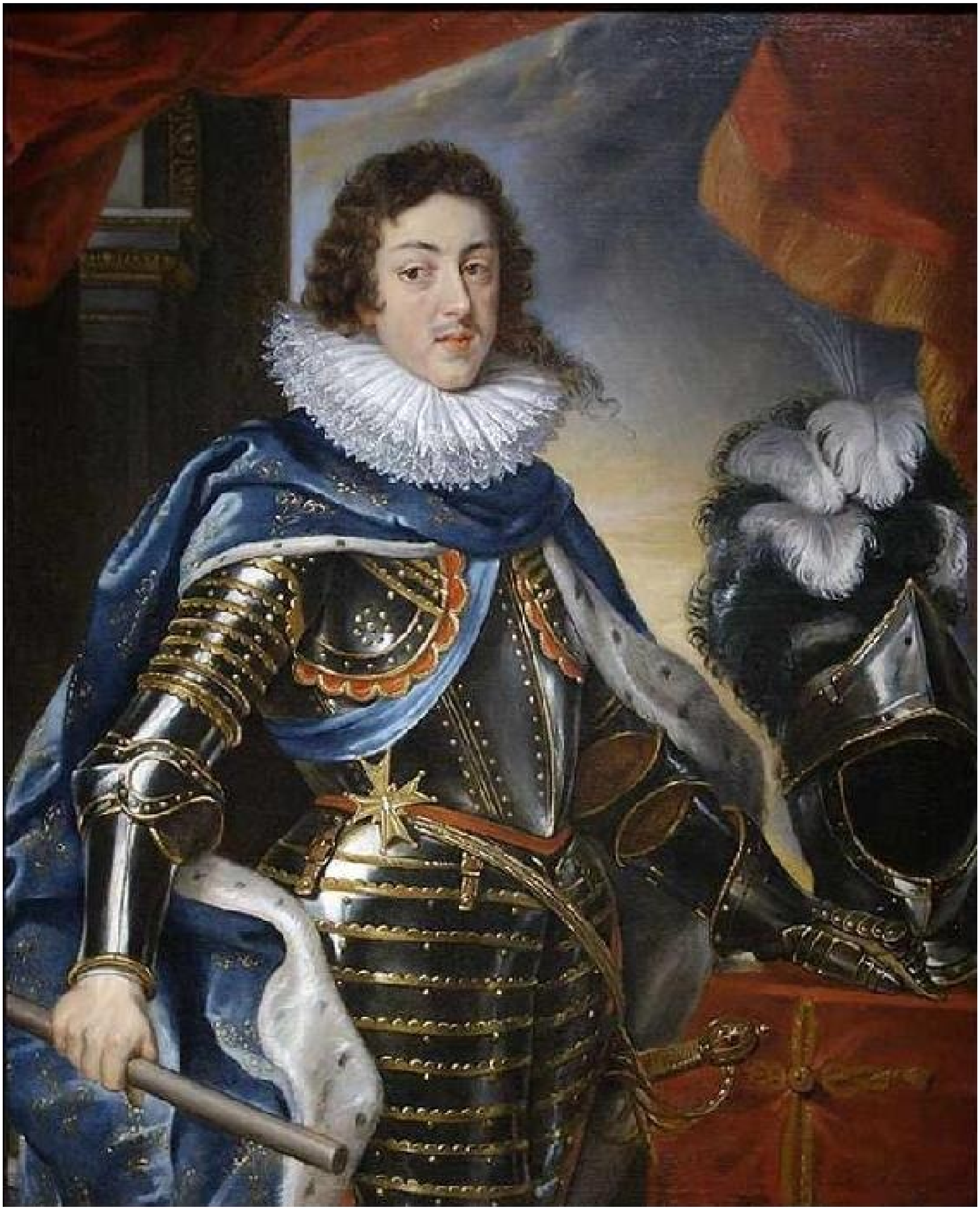
Infanta Isabella, the ruler of the Netherlands

1625



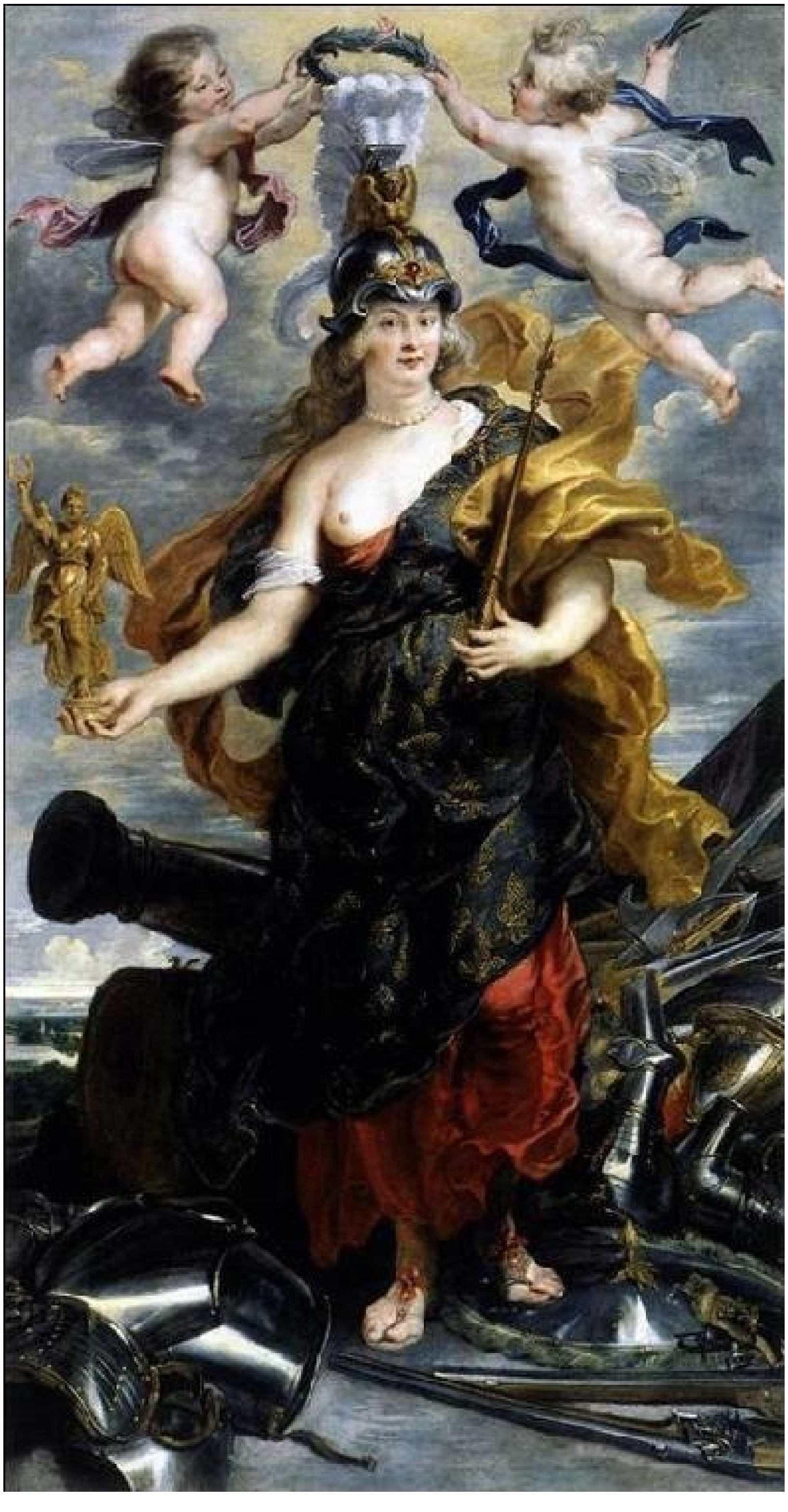
Louis XIII

1625



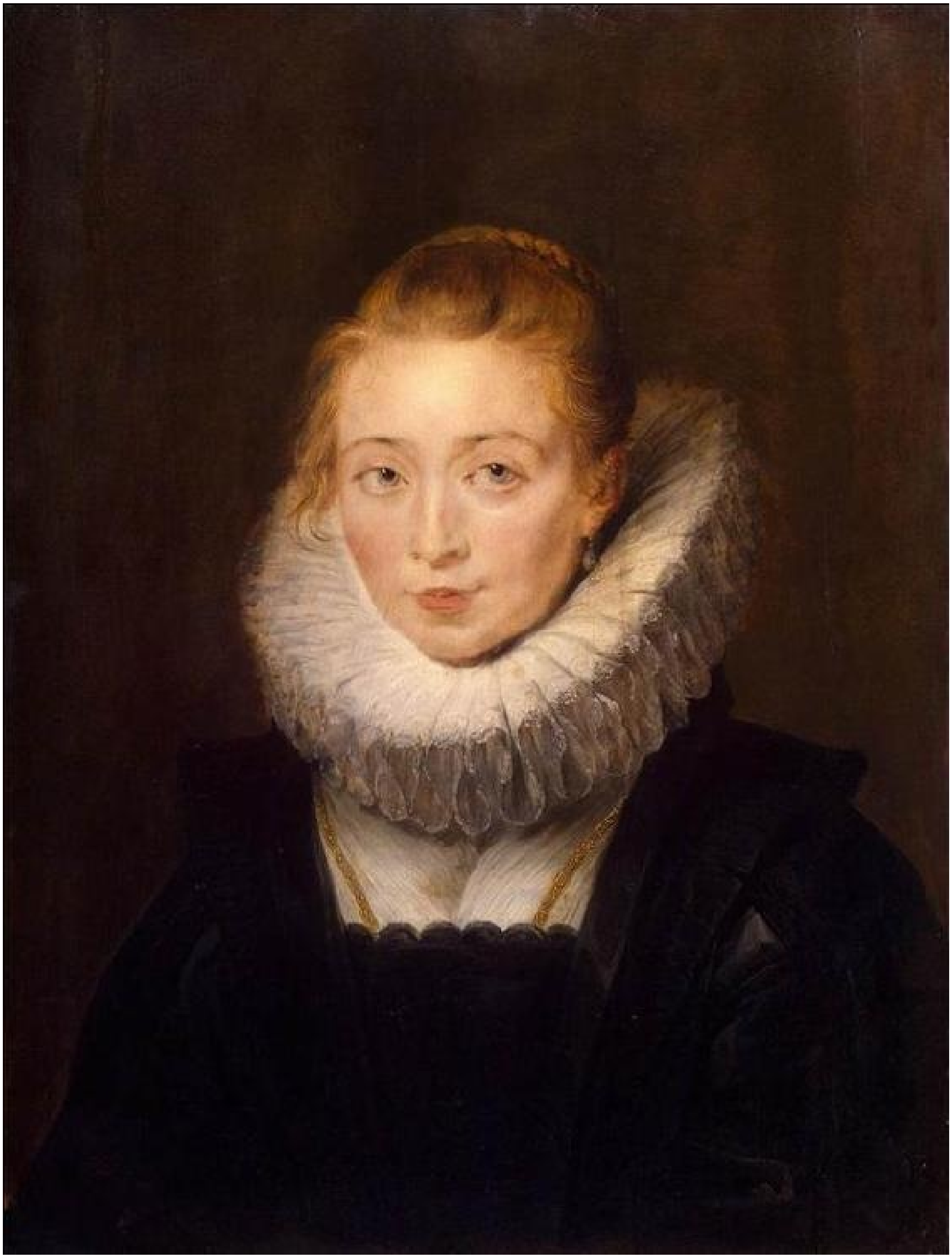
Marie de Medicis as Bellona

1625
276 x 149 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



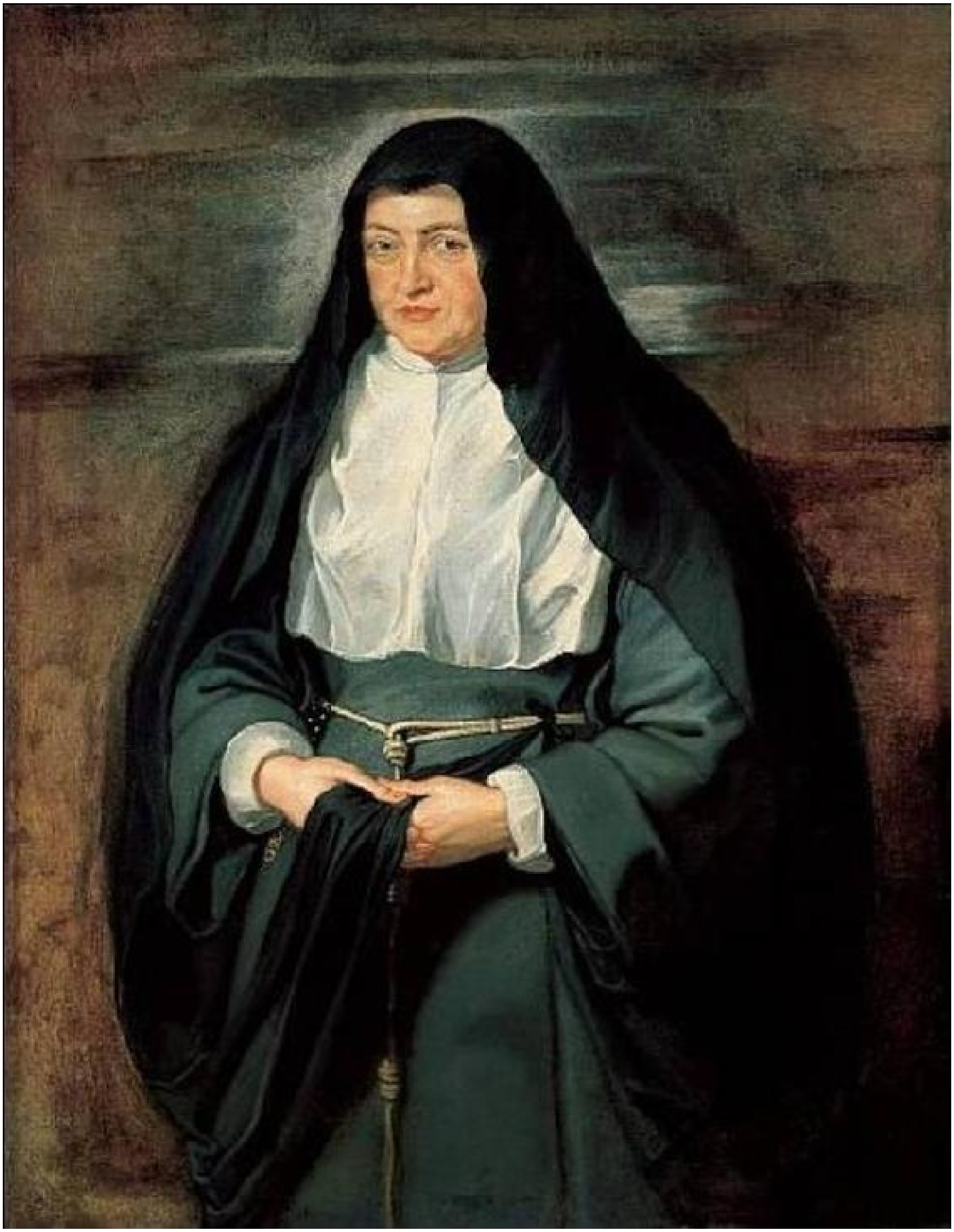
Portrait of a Chambermaid (Rubens daughter Clara Serena)

c.1625
64 x 48 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



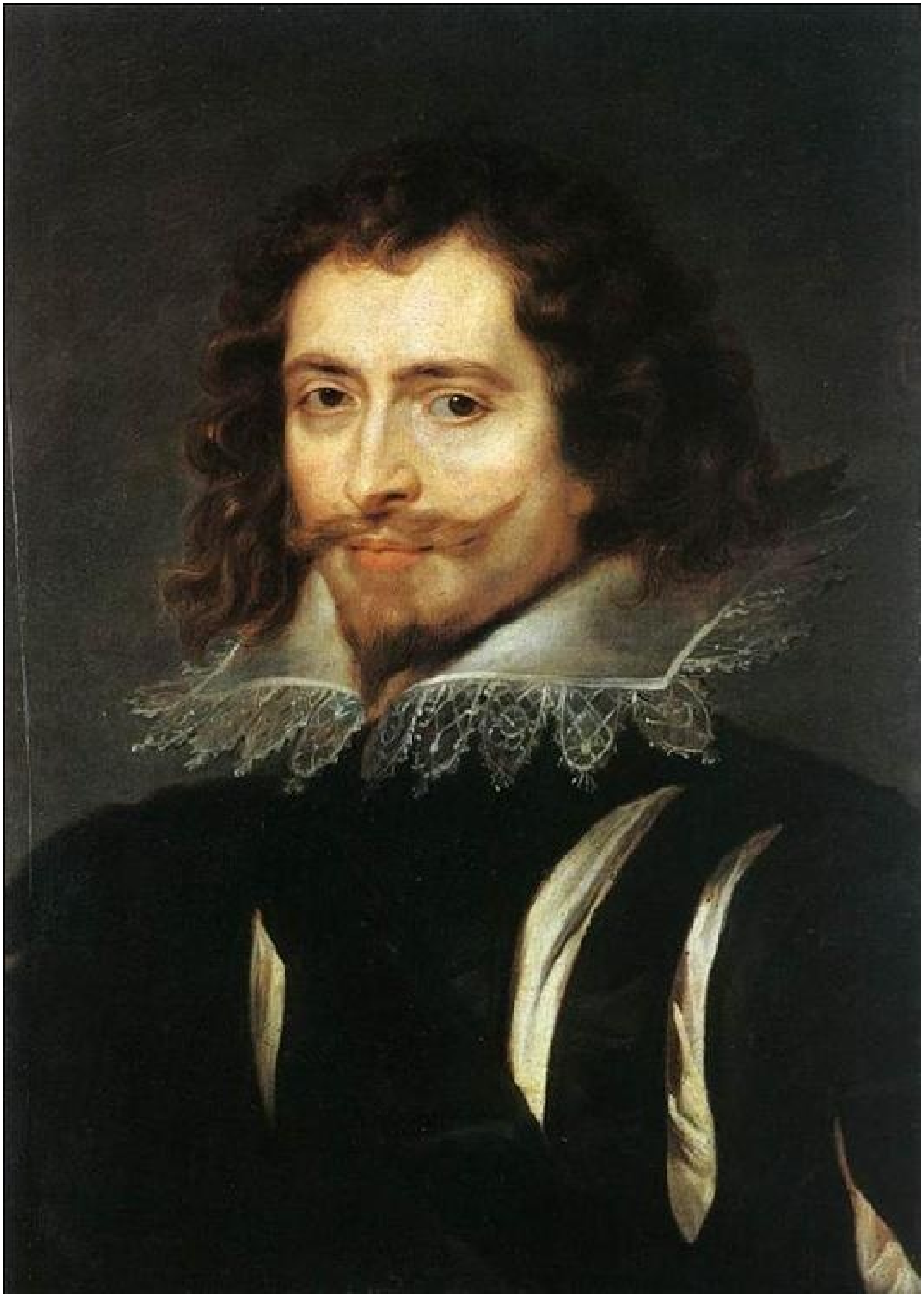
Portrait of Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia

1625
116 x 89 cm



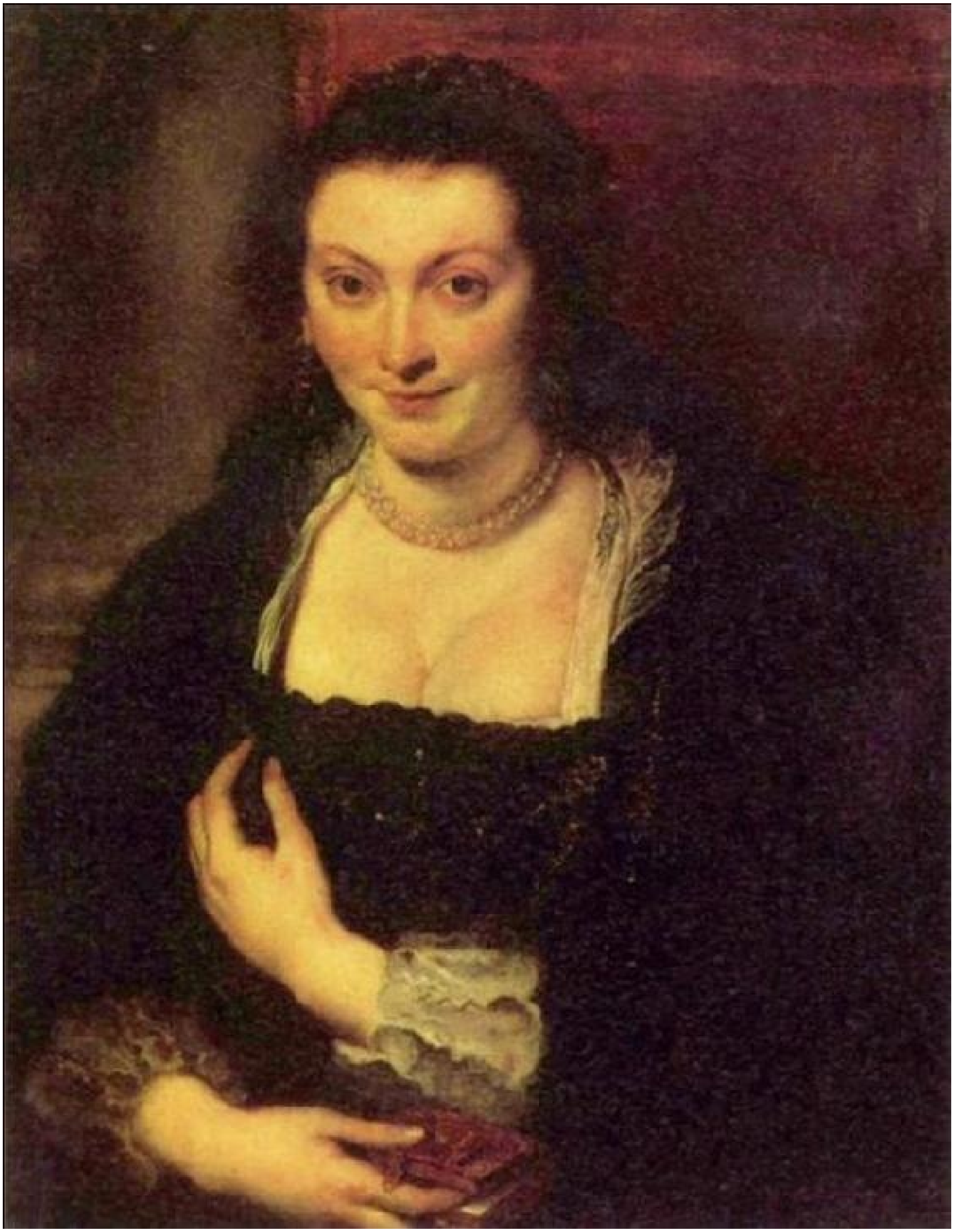
Portrait of George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham

c.1625
63 x 48 cm
Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy



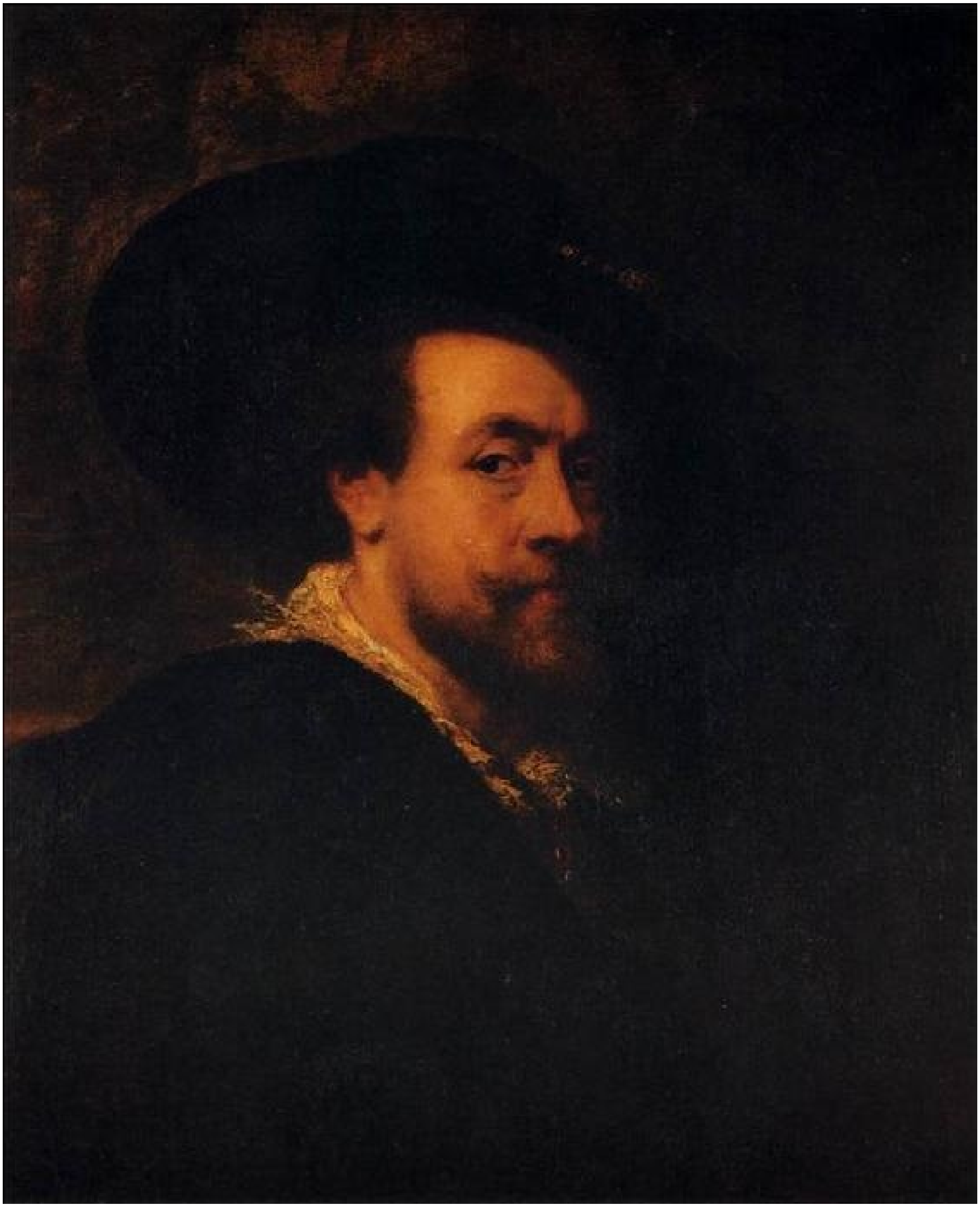
Portrait of Isabella Brandt

c.1625
86 x 62 cm
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy



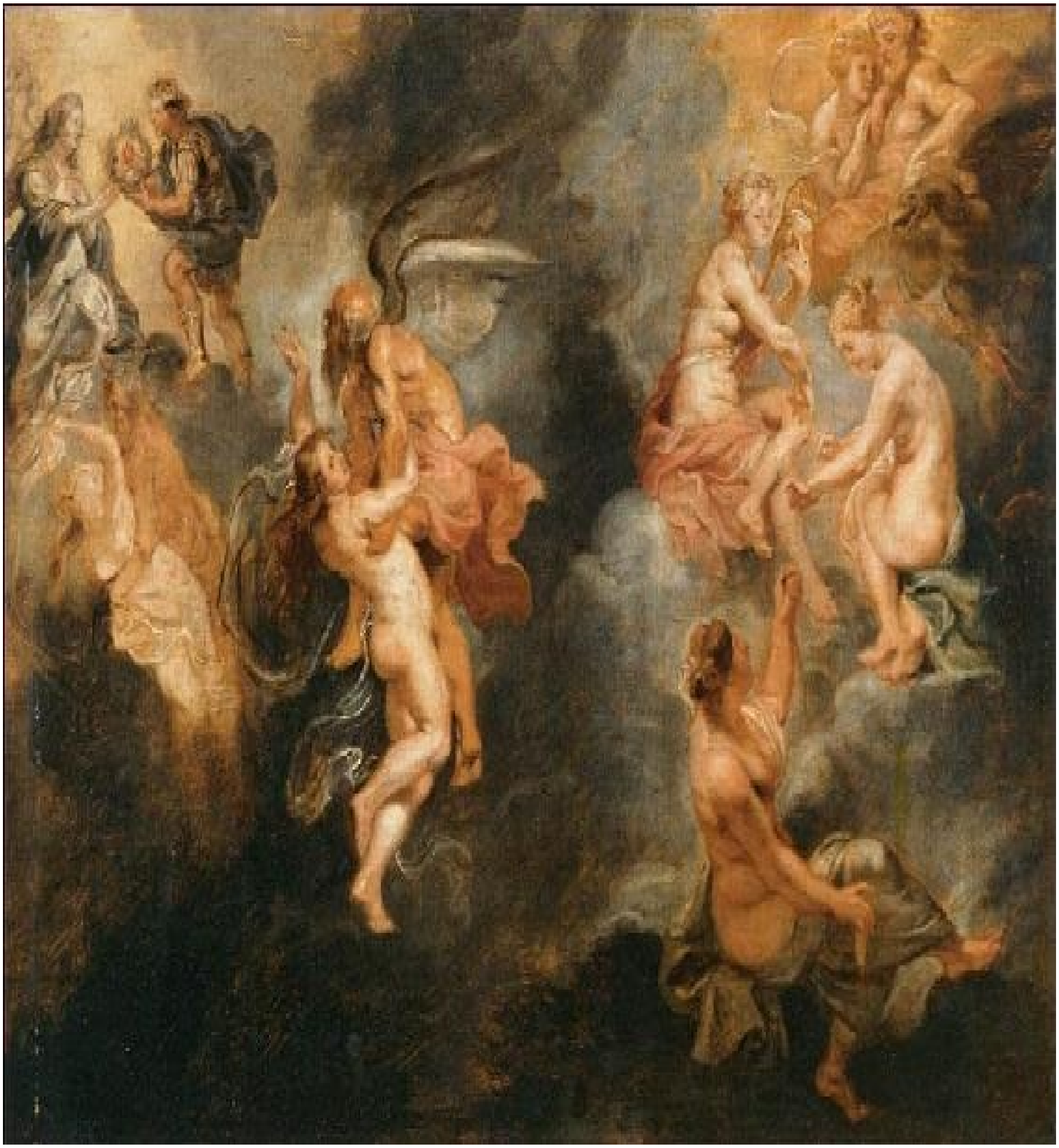
Self-Portrait

1625
85 x 61 cm
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy



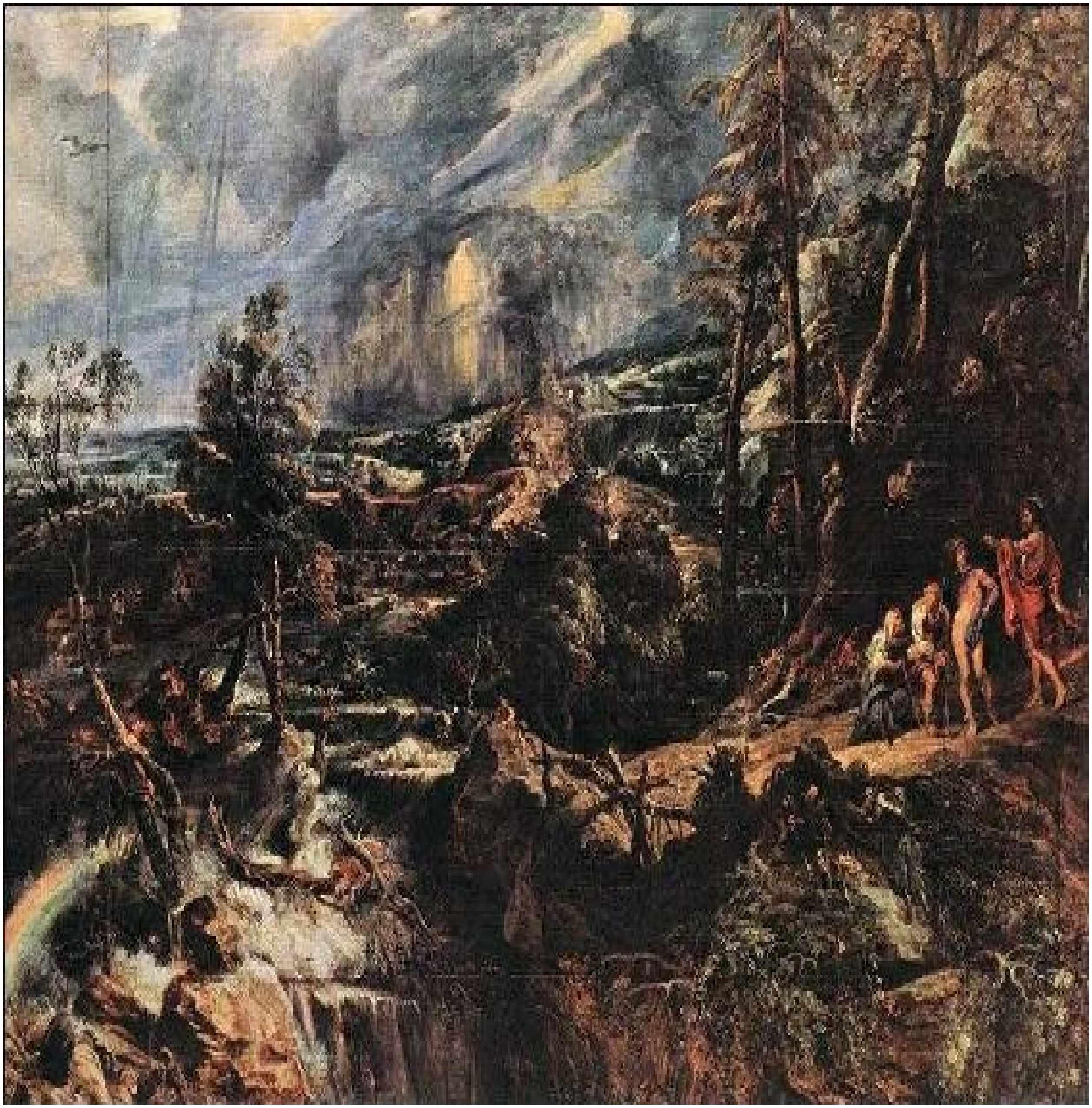
Sketches

1625
50 x 64 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



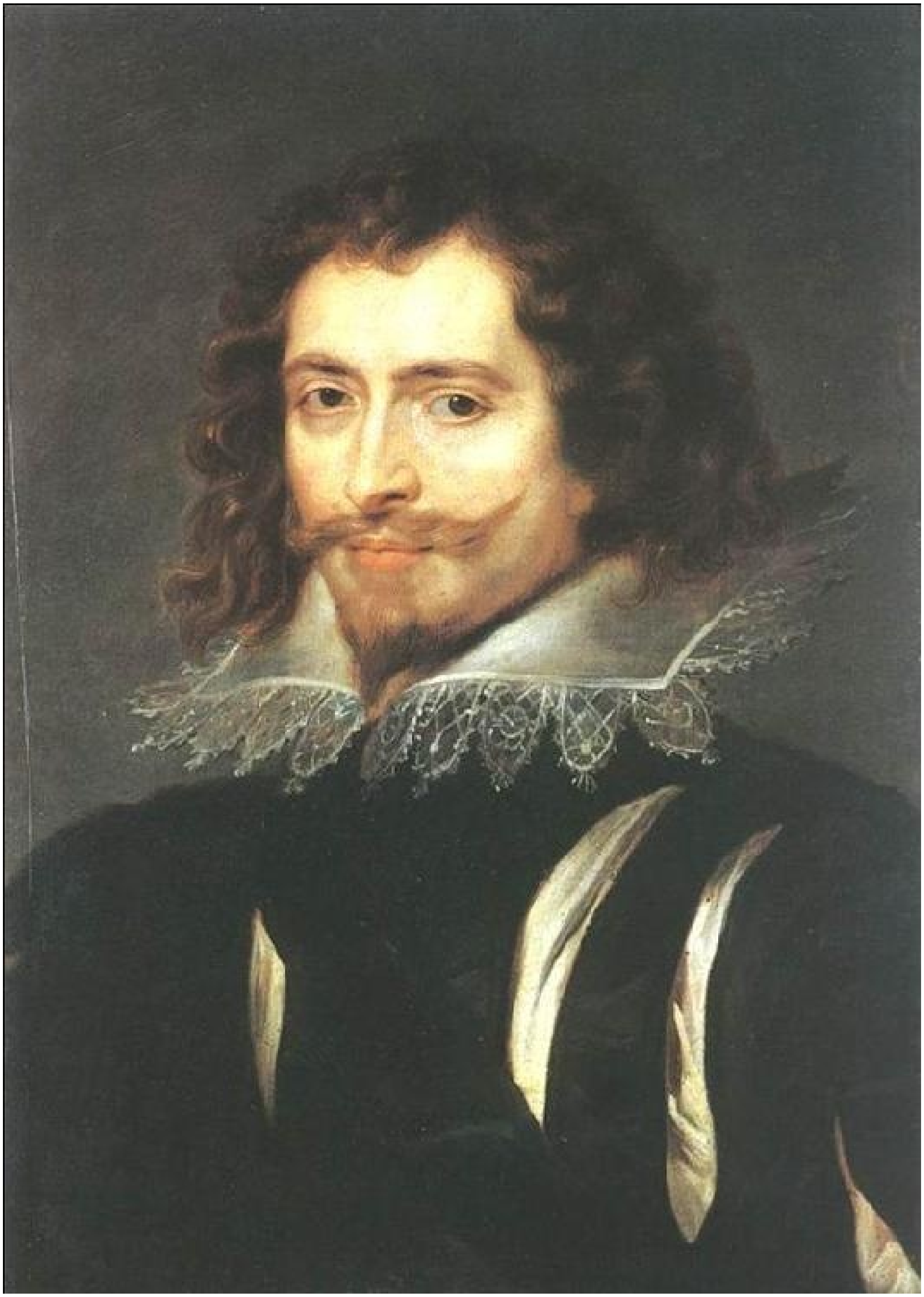
Stormy Landscape

c.1625
147 x 209 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



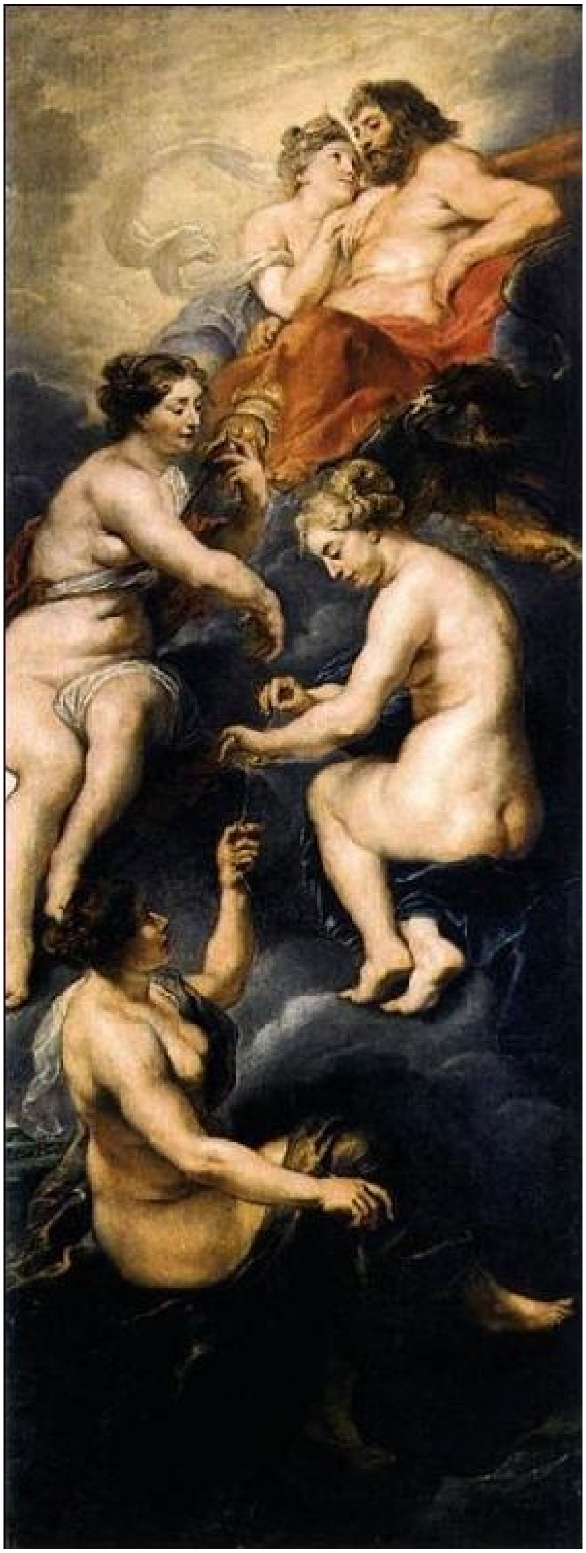
The Duke of Buckingham

c.1625
63 x 48 cm



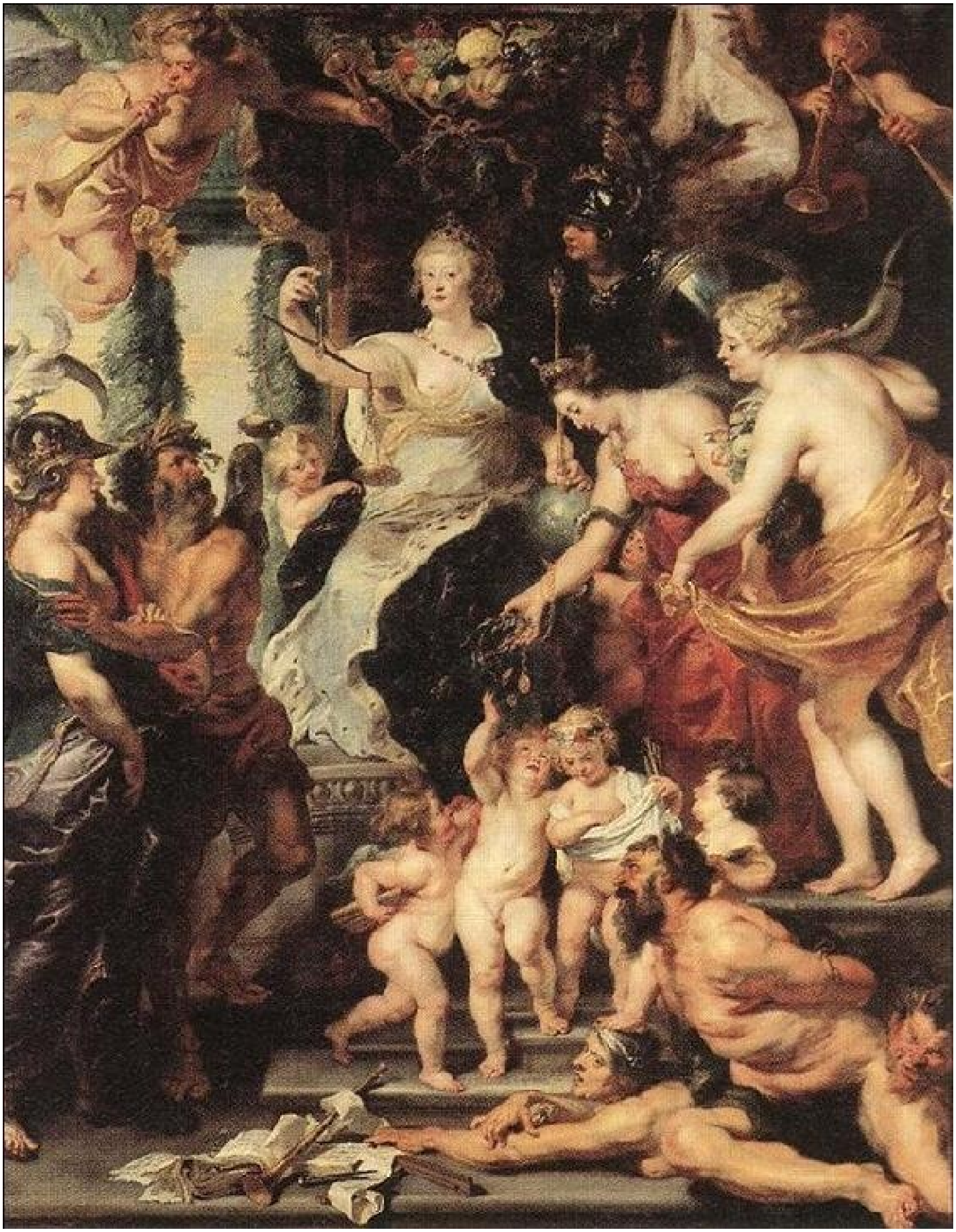
The Fate Spinning Maries Destiny

1625
394 x 153 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



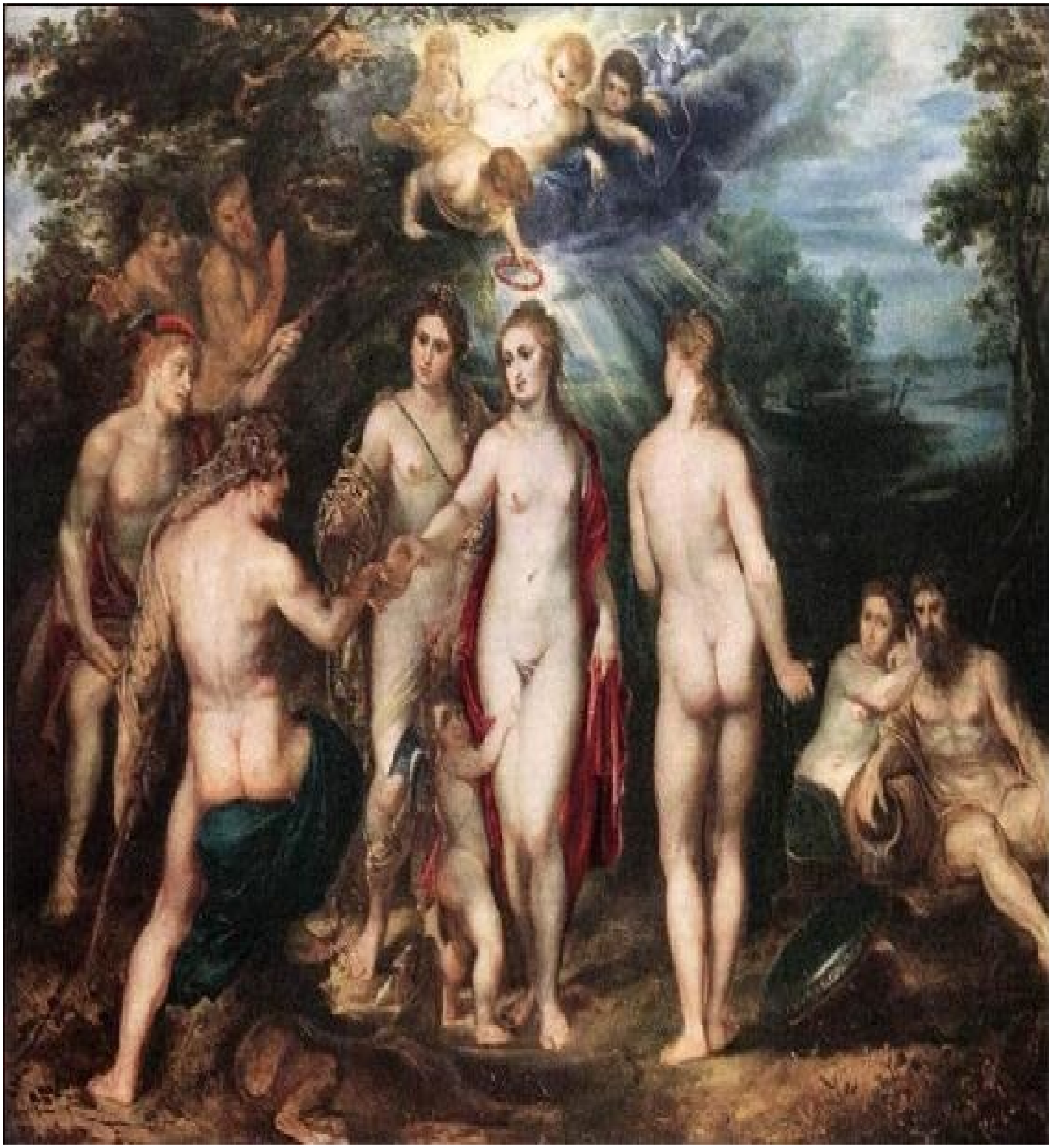
The Happiness of the Regency

1625
394 x 295 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



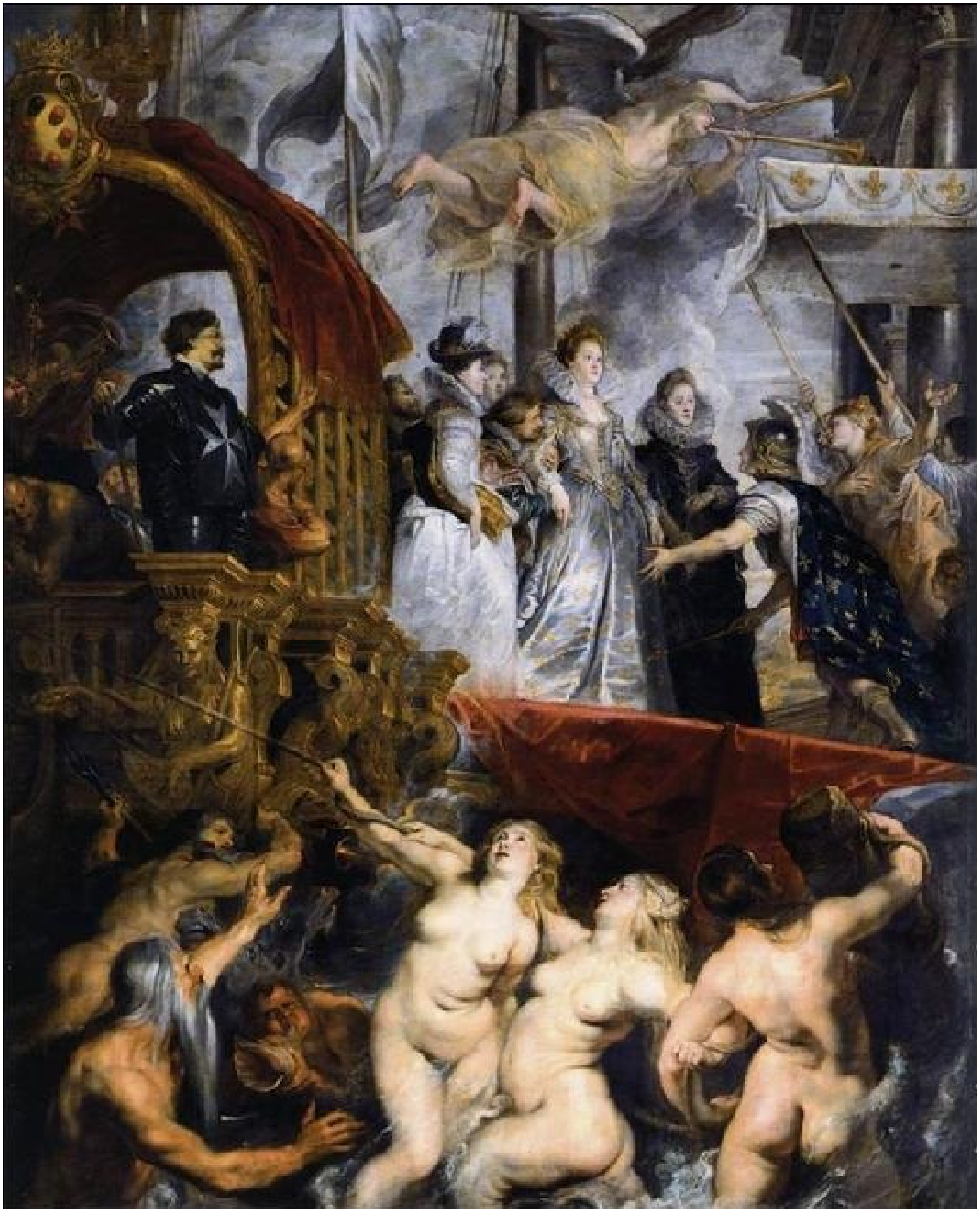
The Judgment of Paris

c.1625
139 x 174 cm
National Gallery, London



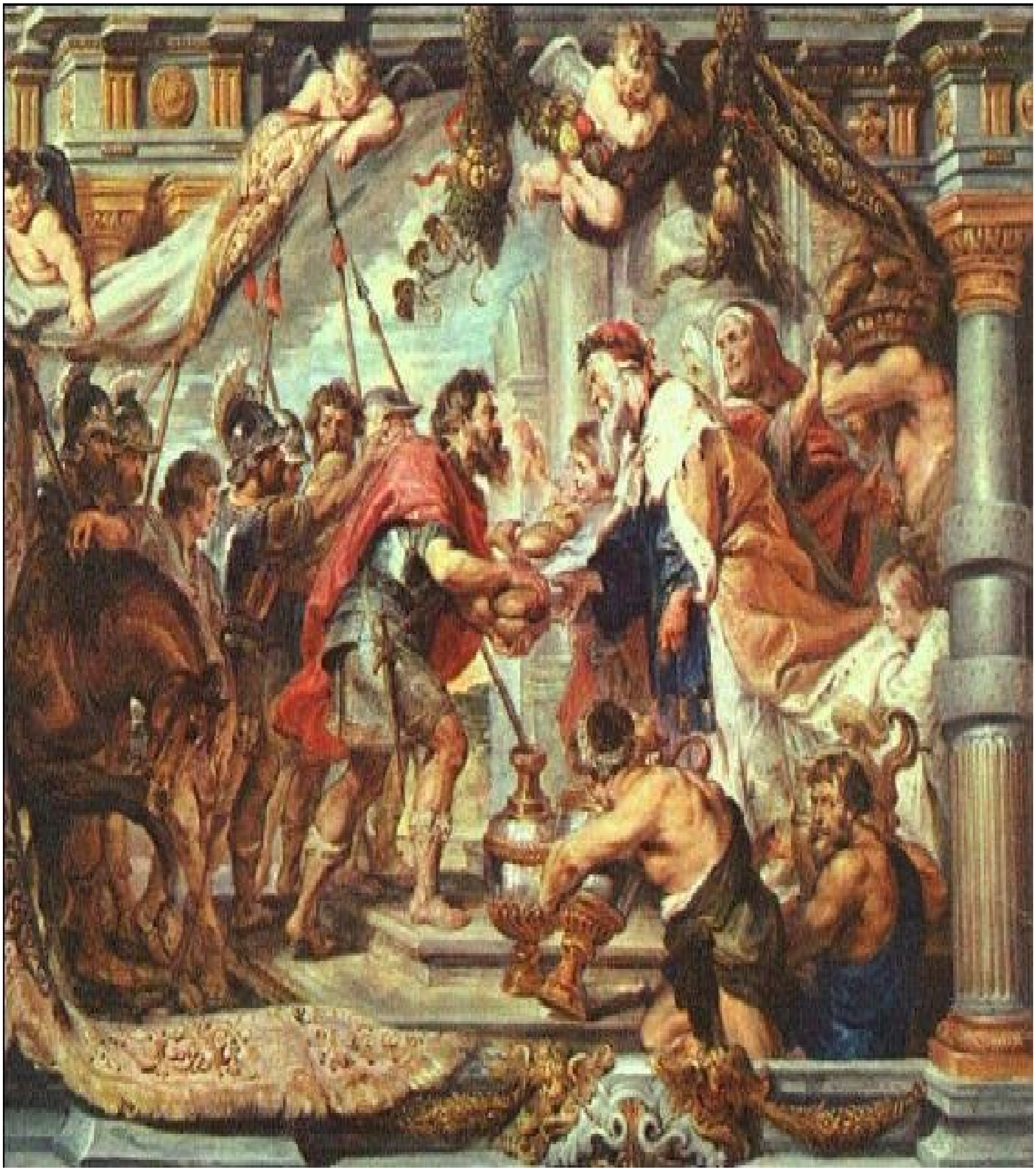
The Landing at Marseilles, 3rd November 1600

1625
394 x 295 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



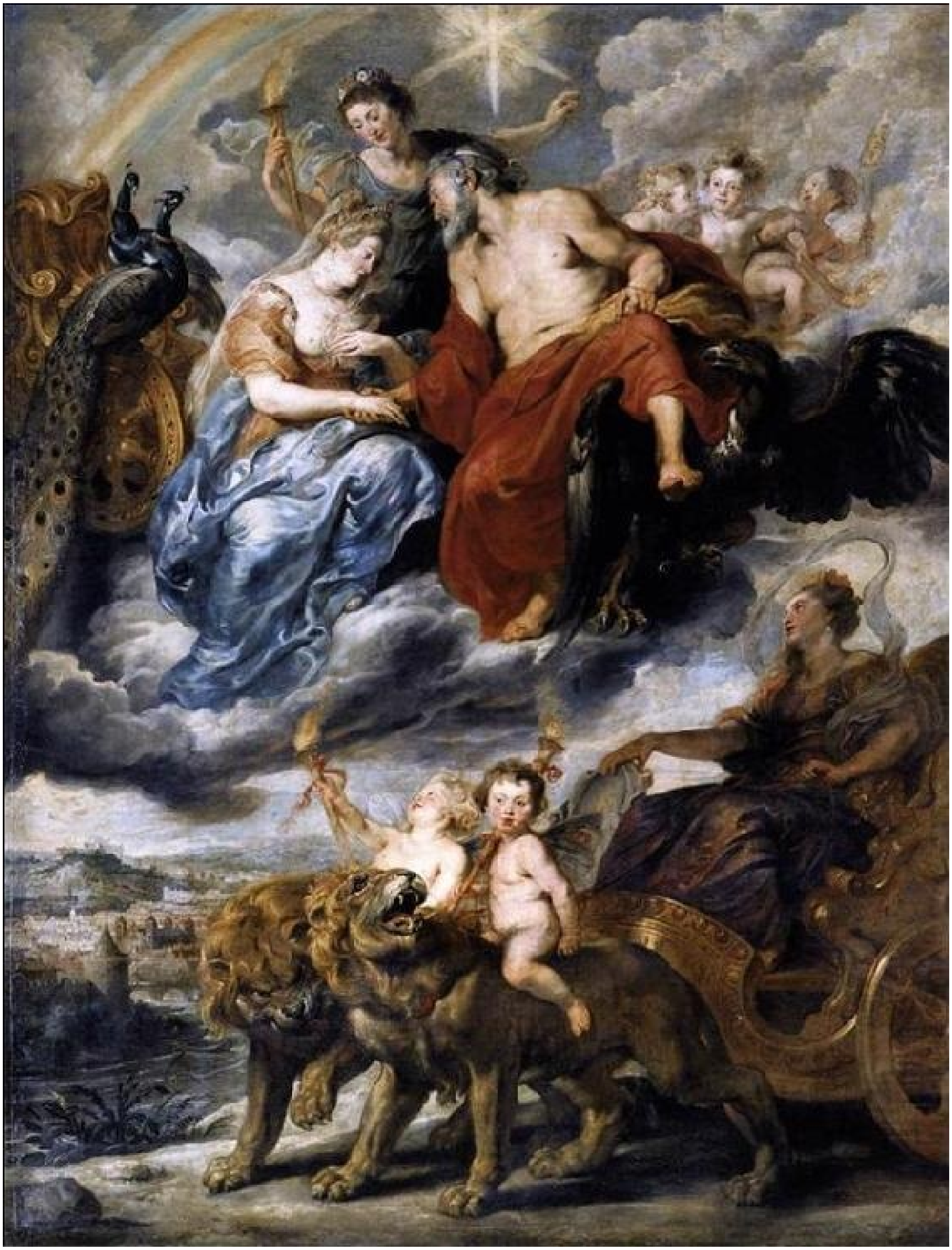
The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek

1625
National Gallery of Art, Washingon, DC, USA



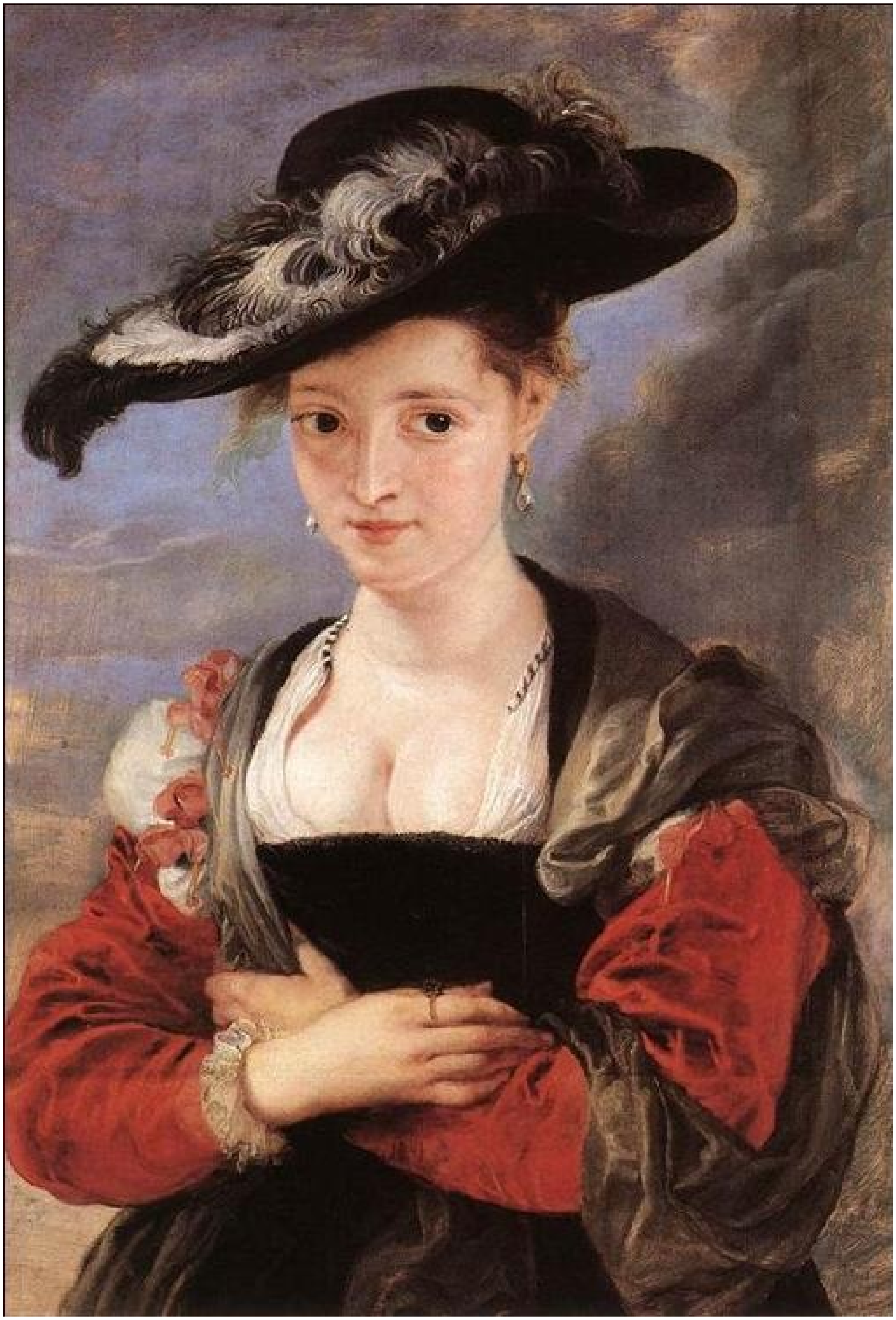
The Meeting of the King and Marie de Medici at Lyons, 9th November 1600

1625
394 x 295 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



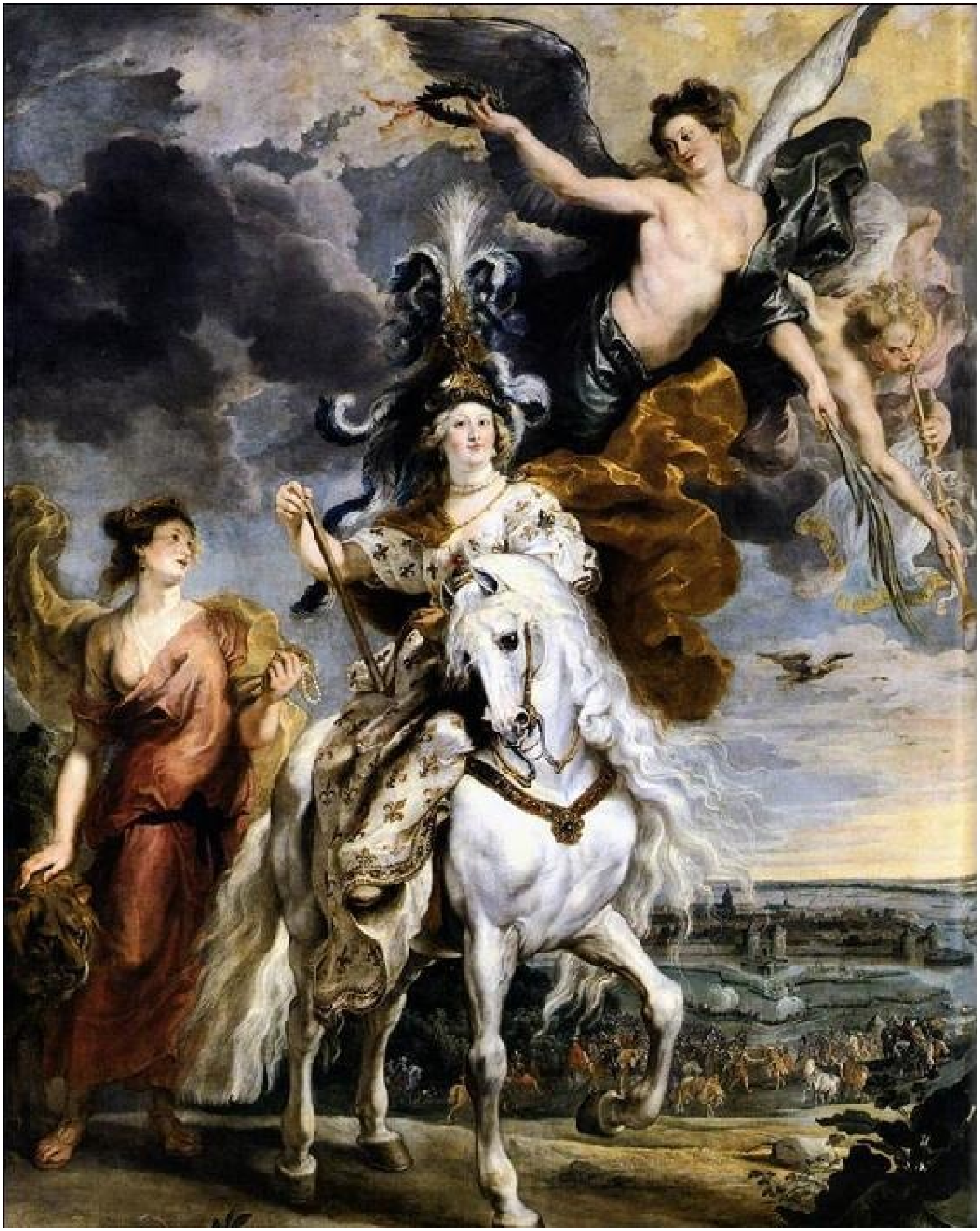
The Straw Hat

c.1625
79 x 55 cm
National Gallery, London



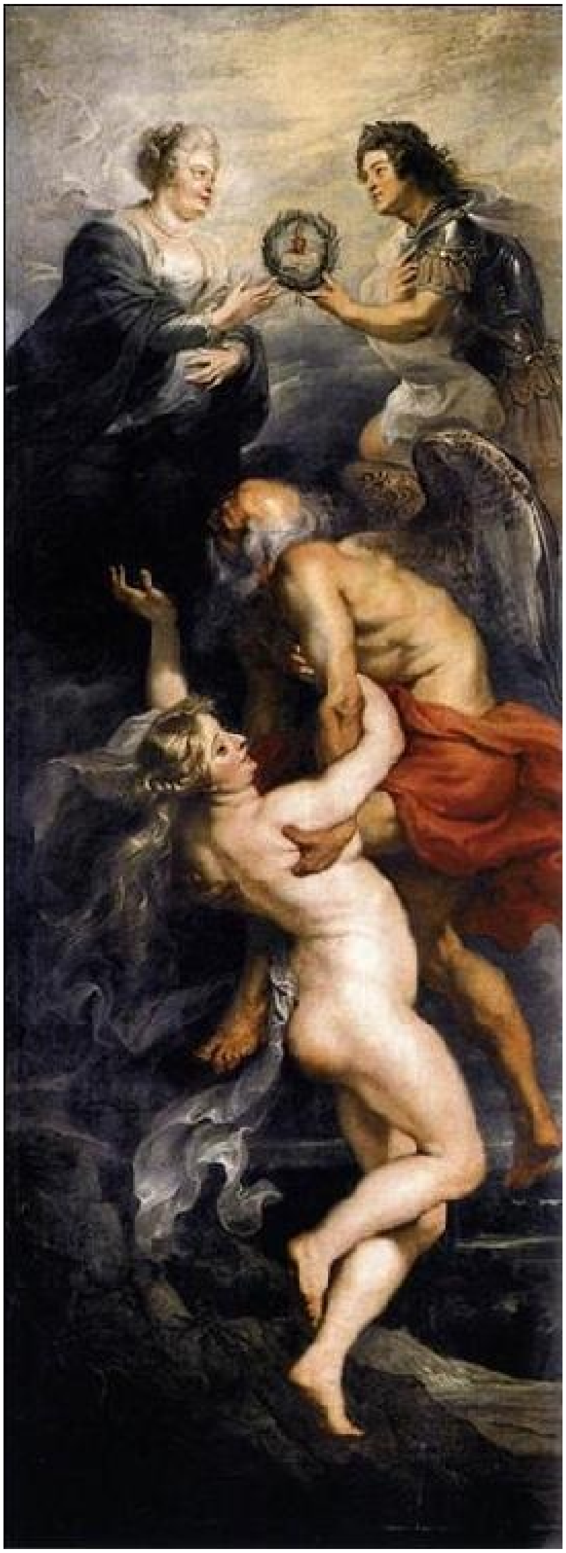
The Triumph of Juliers, 1st September 1610

1625
394 x 295 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



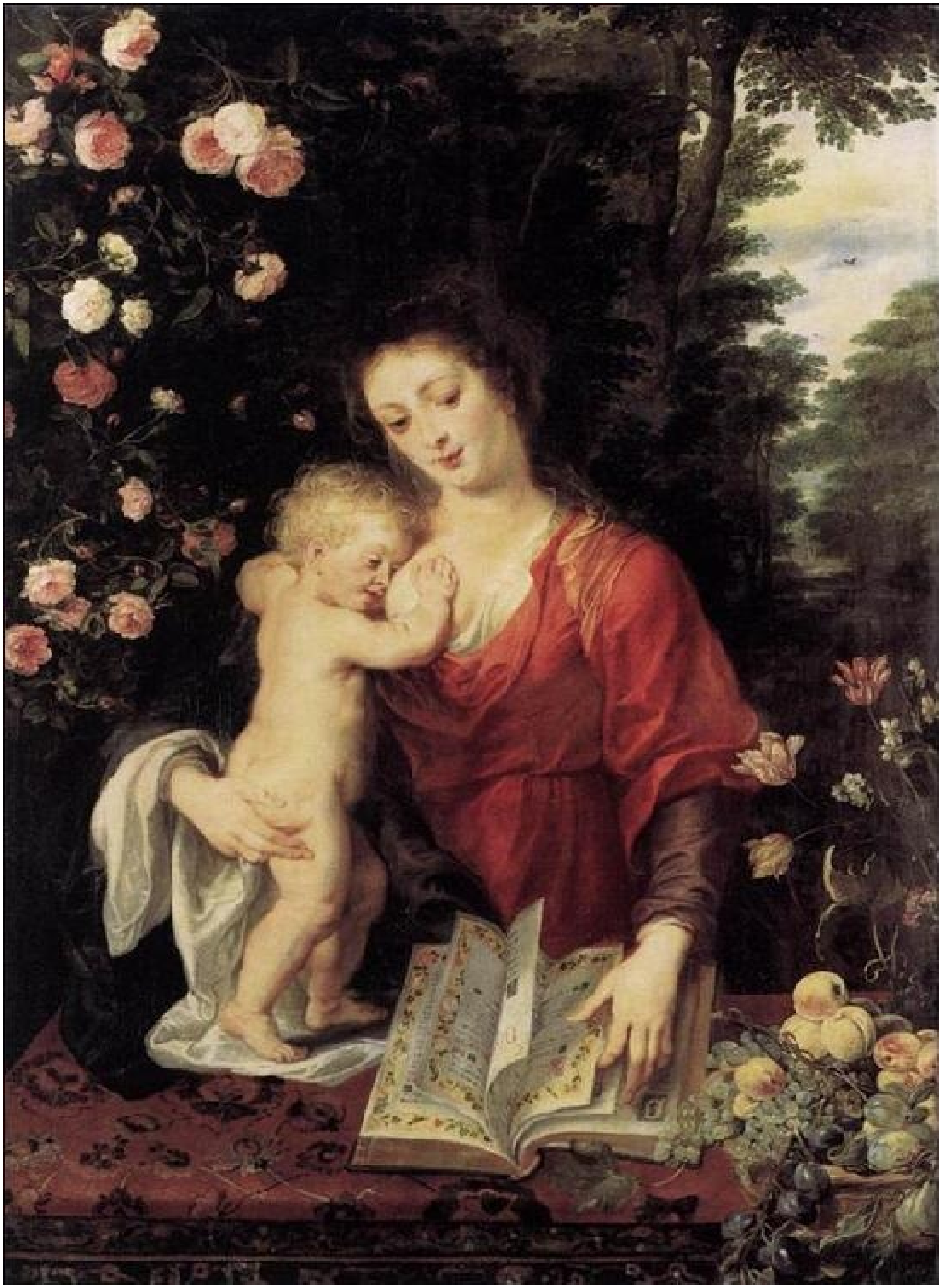
The Triumph of Truth

1625
394 x 160 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



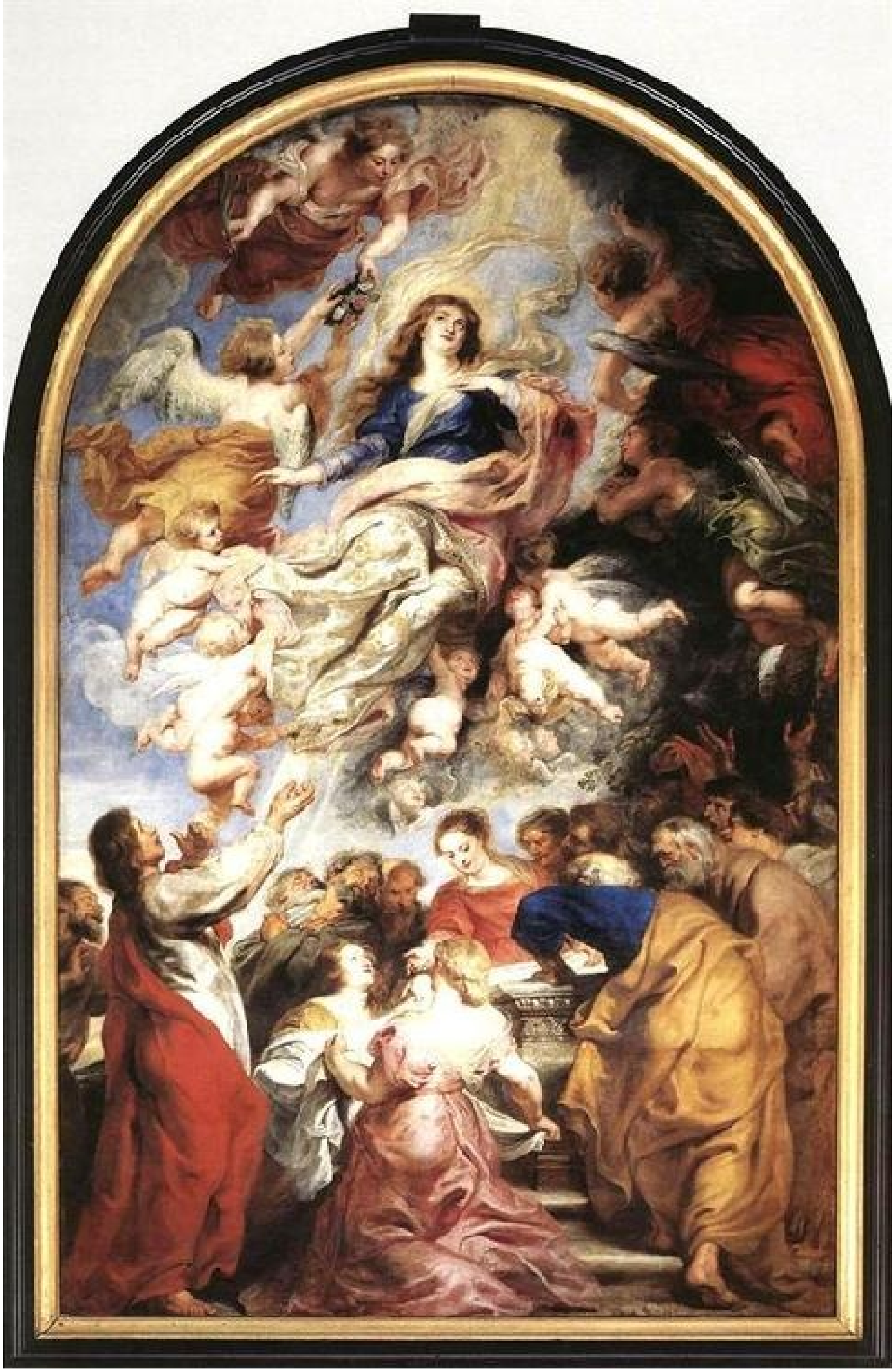
Virgin and Child

1625
151 x 10 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany



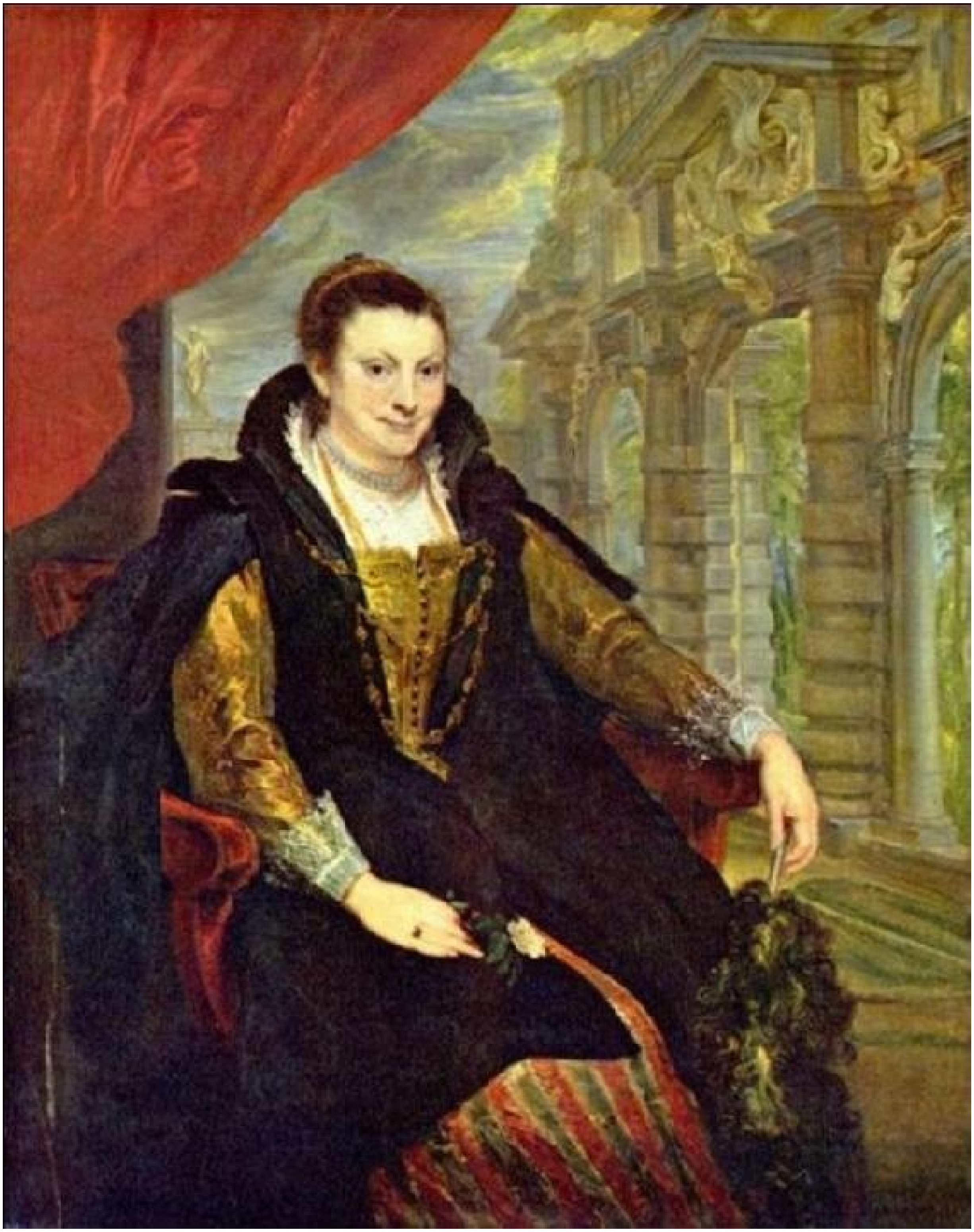
Assumption of the Virgin

1626
490 x 325 cm



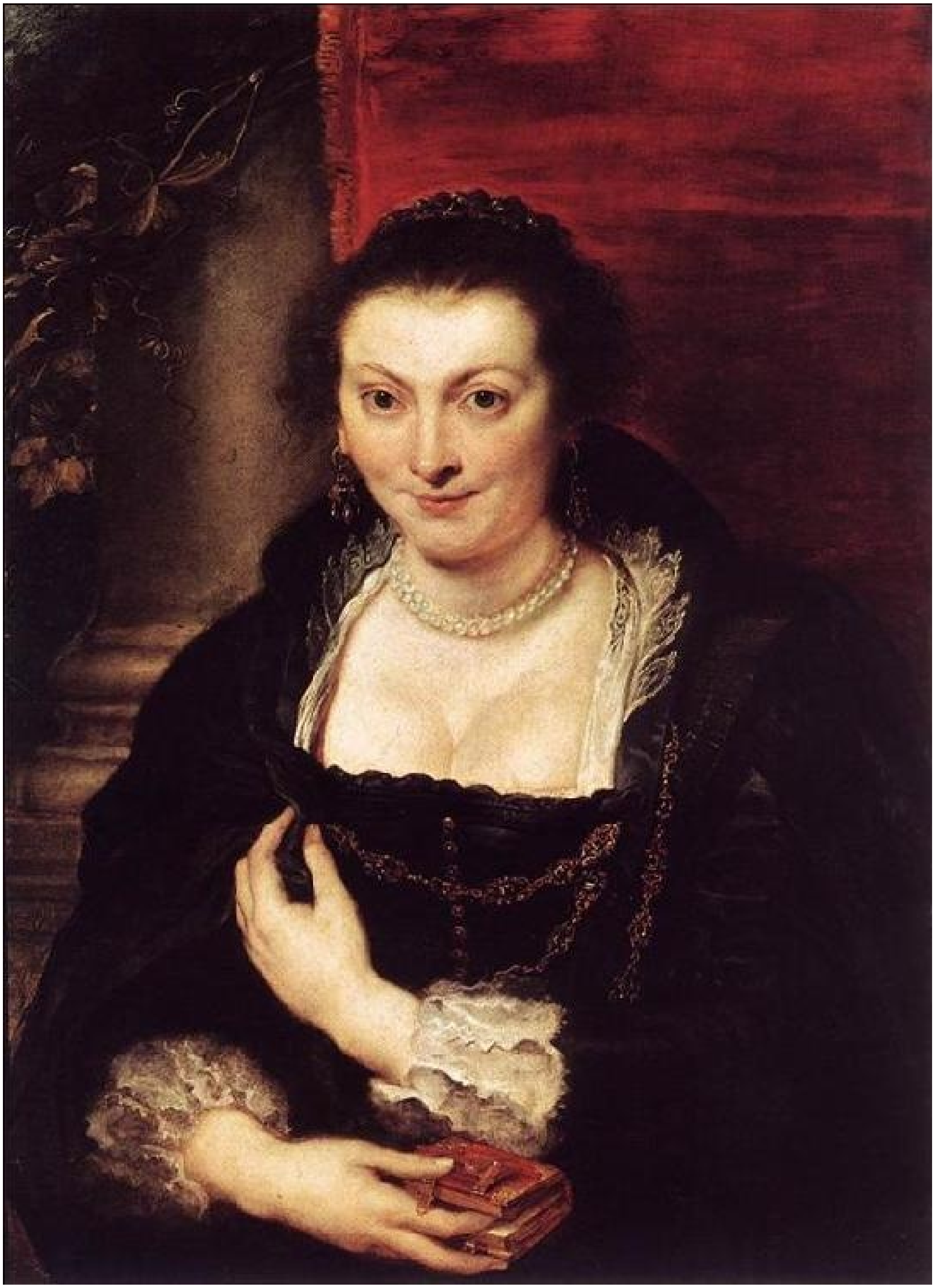
Portrait of Isabella Brandt

1626
153 x 120 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA



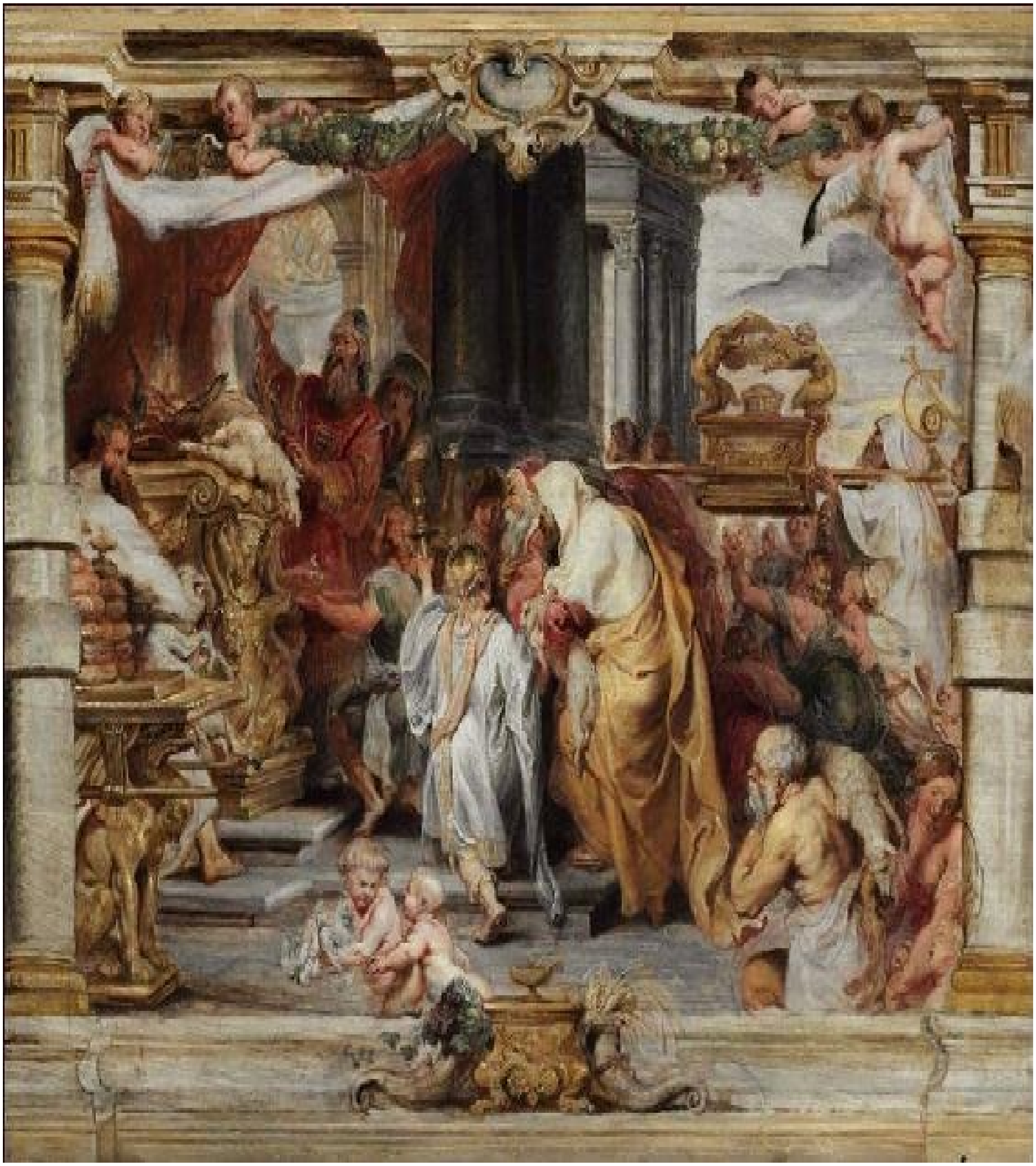
Portrait of Isabella Brant

1626
86 x 62 cm
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy



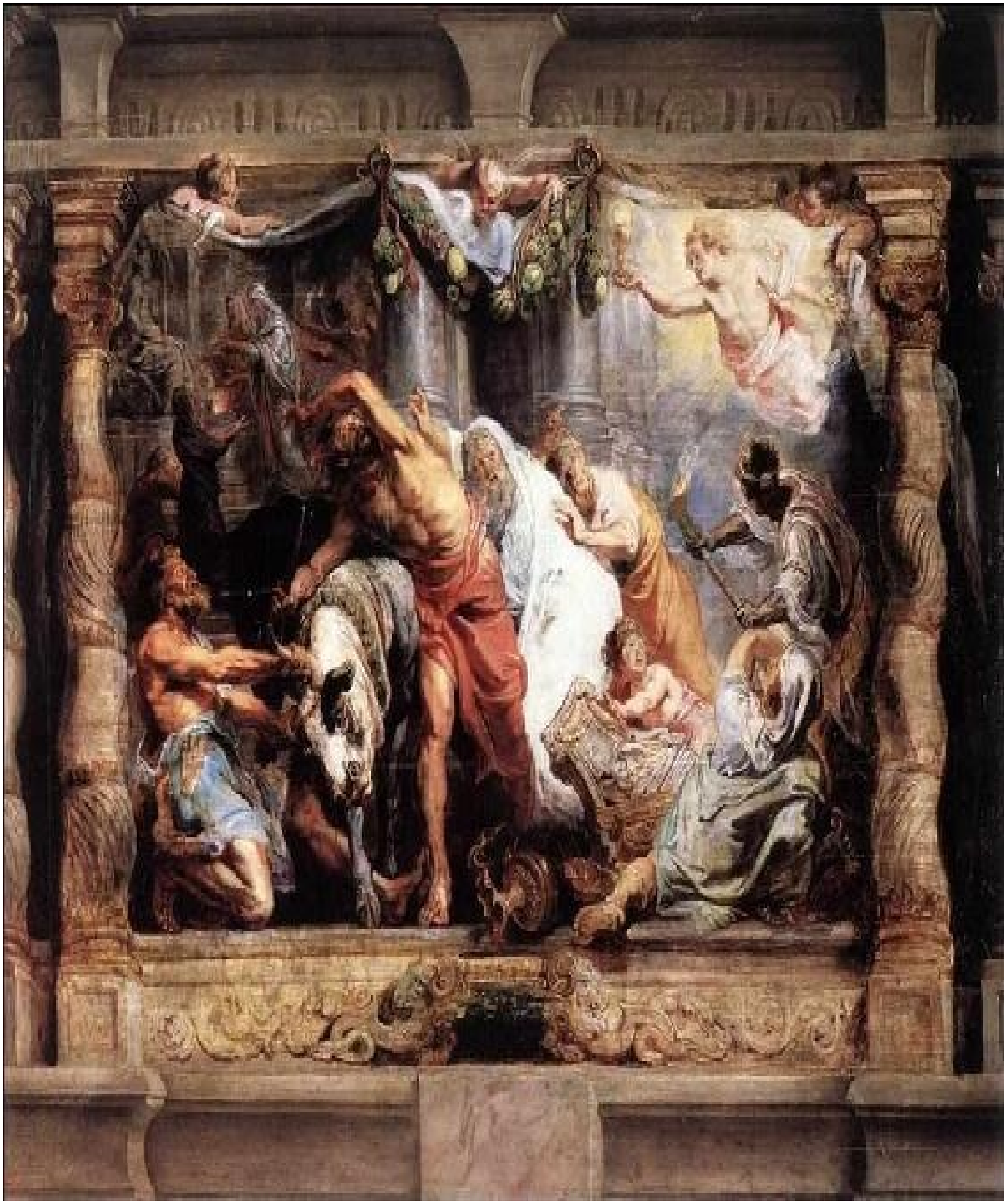
The Sacrifice of the Old Covenant

c.1626
71 x 77 cm



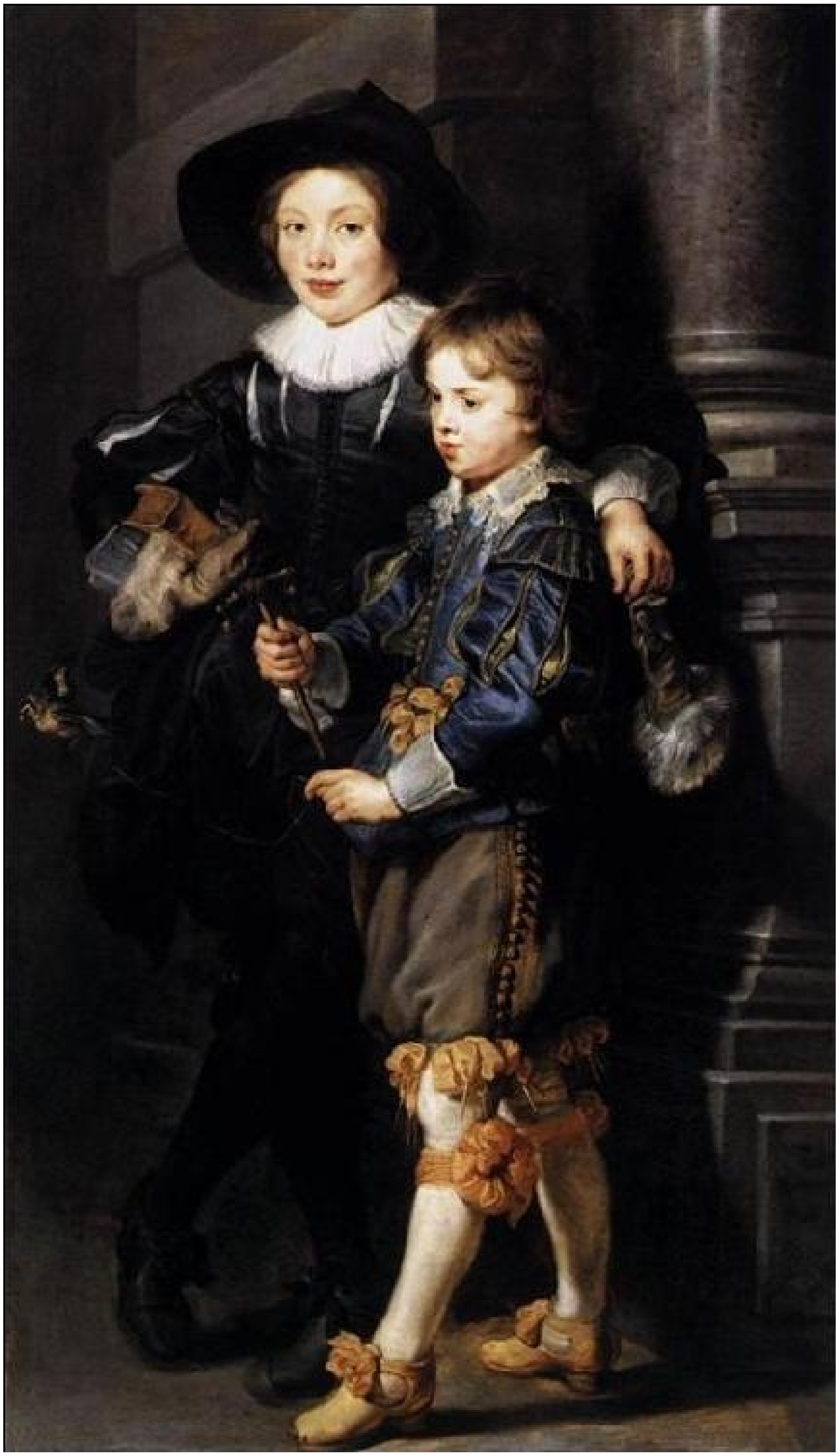
The Victory of Eucharistic Truth over Heresy

c.1626
86 x 105 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



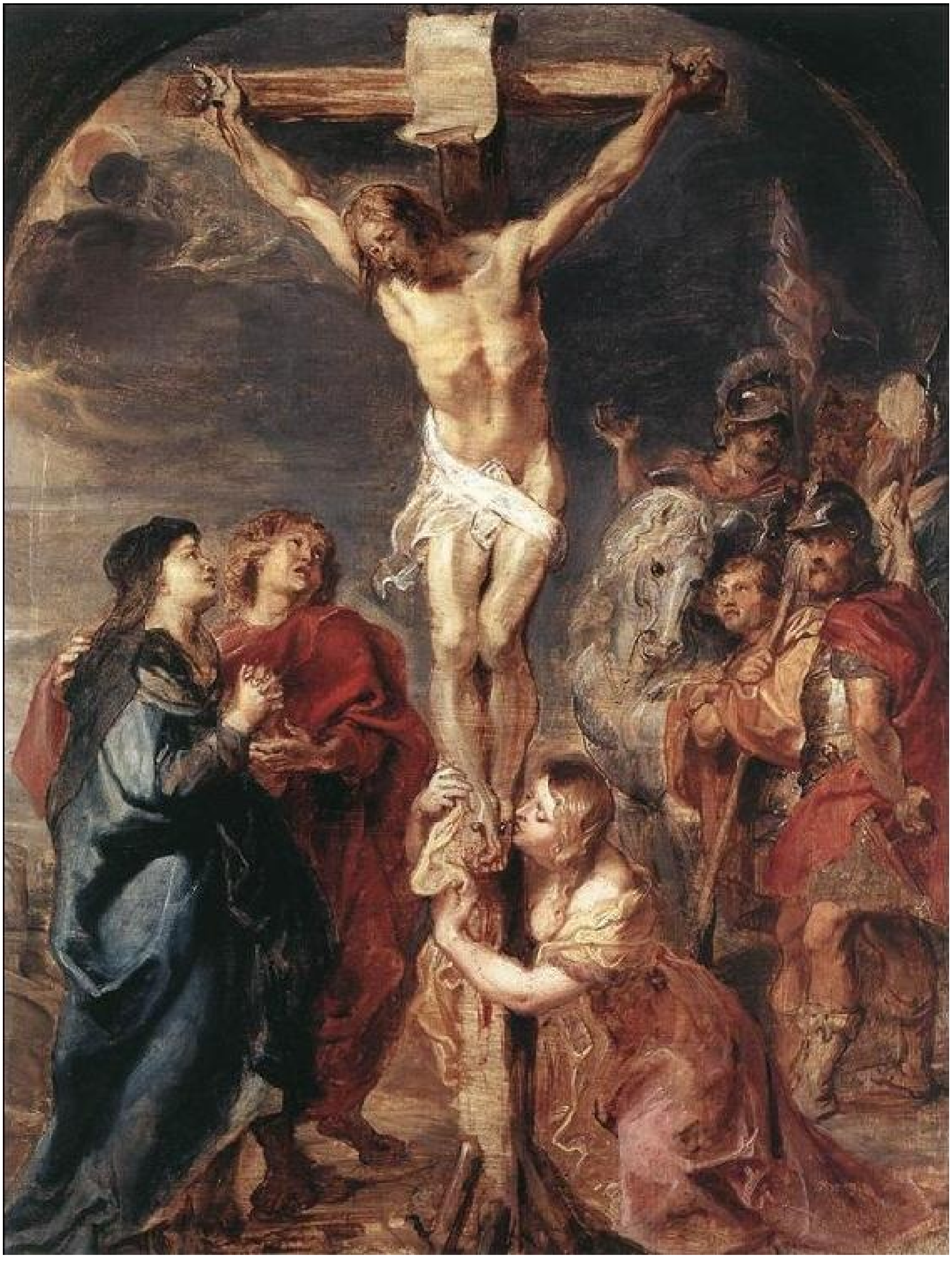
Albert and Nicolaas Rubens

1627
157 x 93 cm



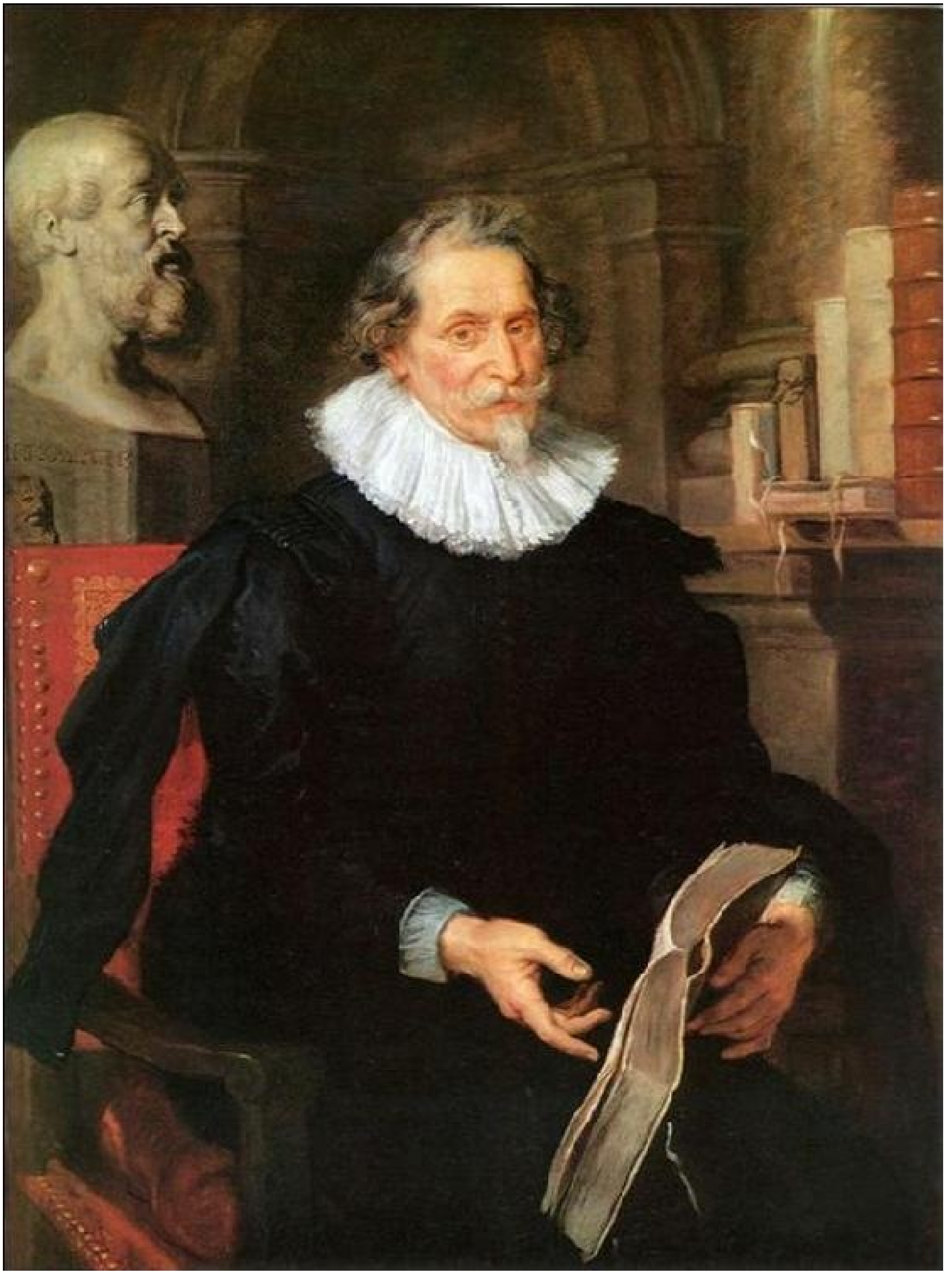
Christ on the Cross

1627
51 x 38 cm



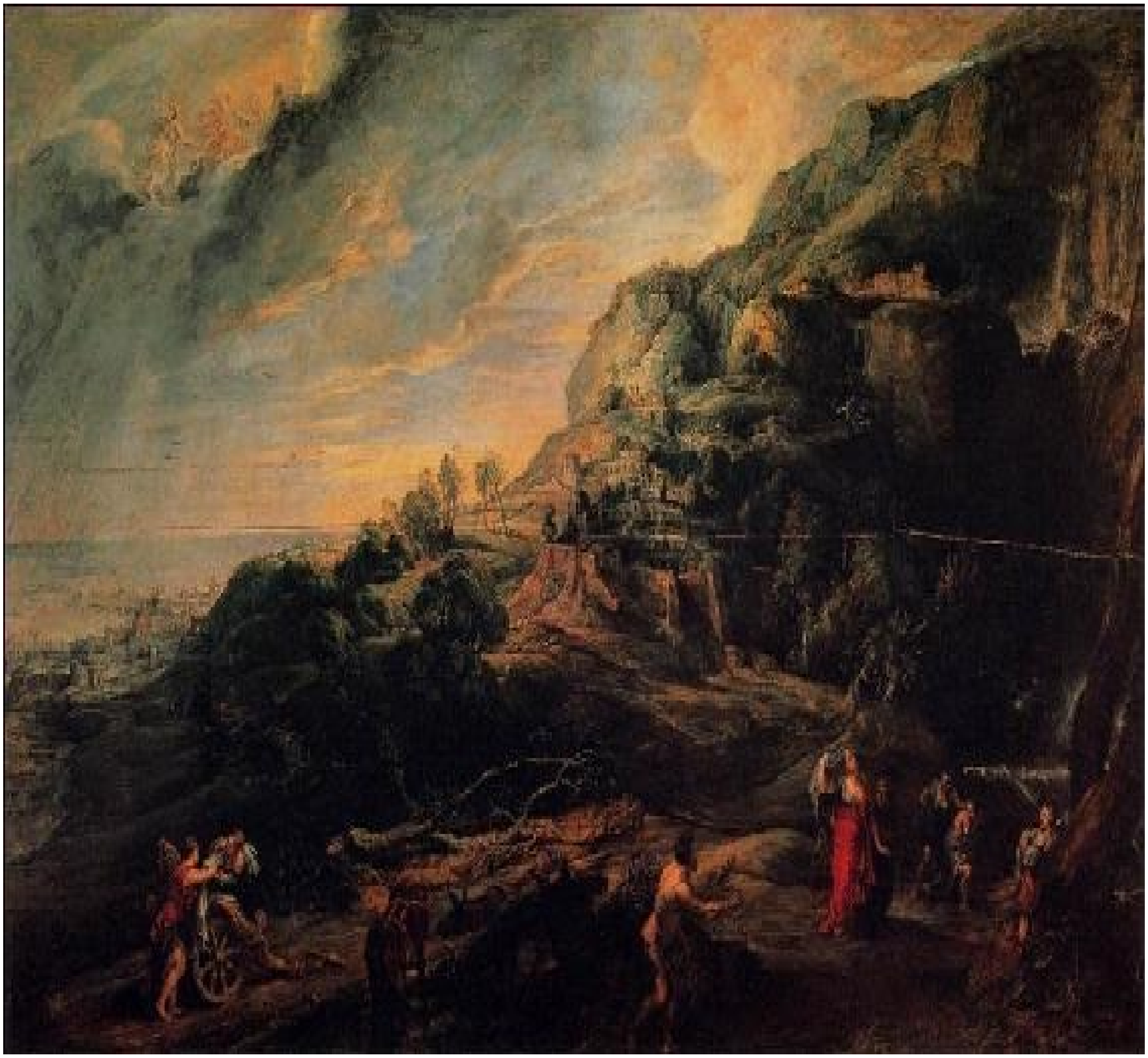
Portrait of Ludovicus Nonnius

c.1627
124 x 92 cm



Ulysses and Nausicaa on the Island of the Phaeacians

c.1627
128 x 207 cm
Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy

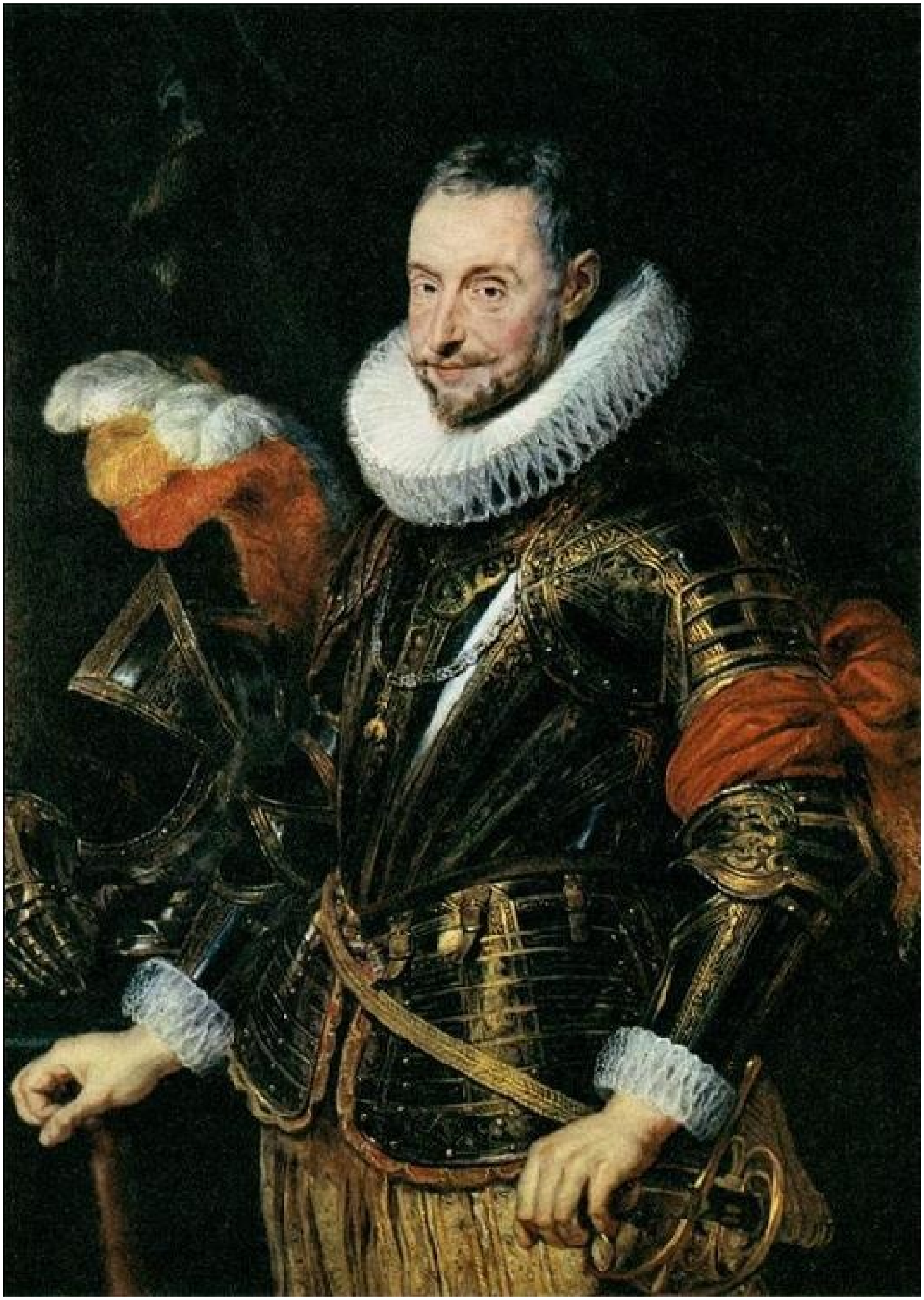


Immaculate Conception

c.1628
198 x 137 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain

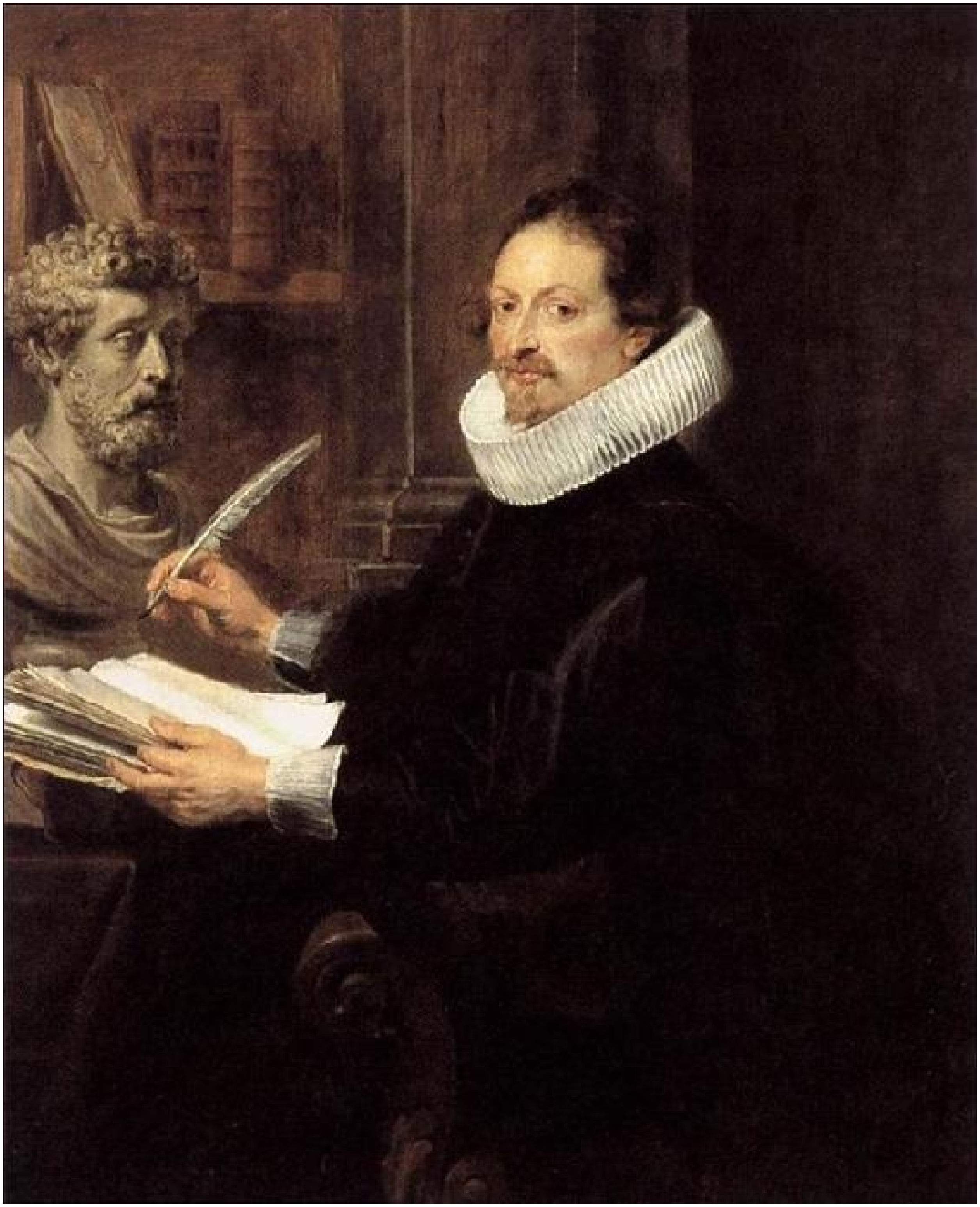
Portrait of Ambrogio Spinola

1628
117 x 85 cm
National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic



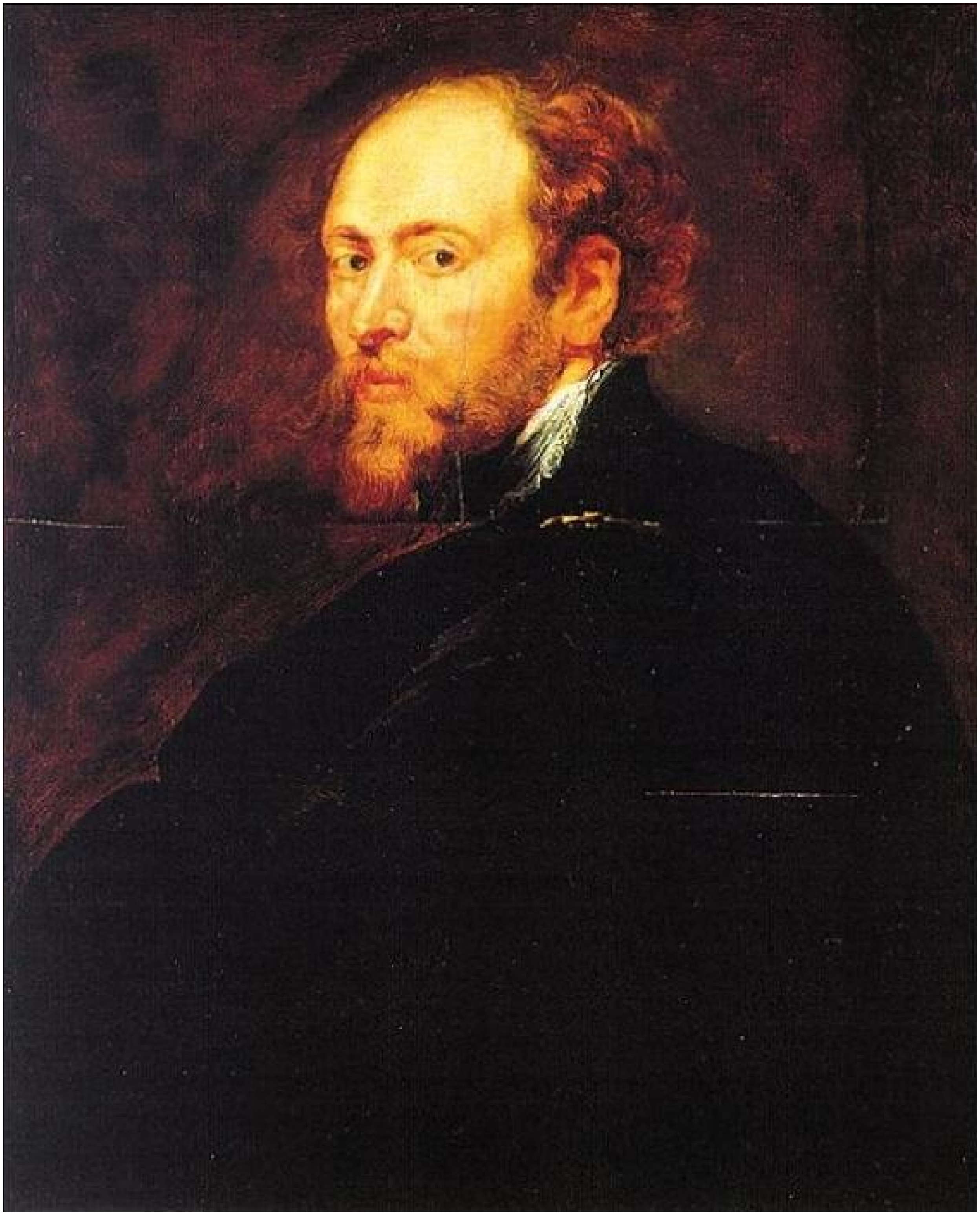
Portrait of Jan Gaspar Gevartius

c.1628
119 x 98 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten



Self-Portrait

1628
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy

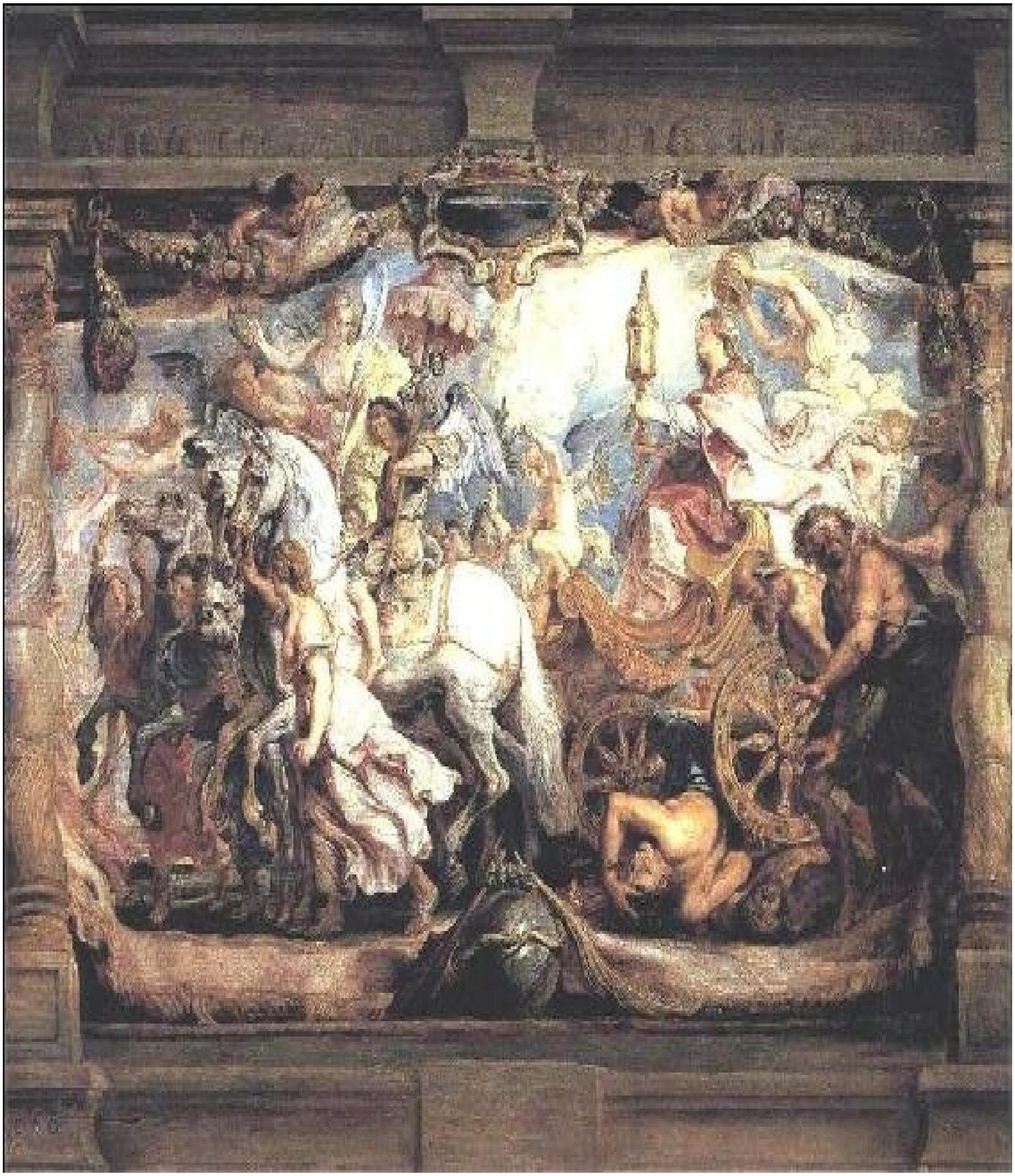


The Prophet Elijah Receiving Bread and Water from an Angel

1628
Musee Bonnat, Bayonne, France

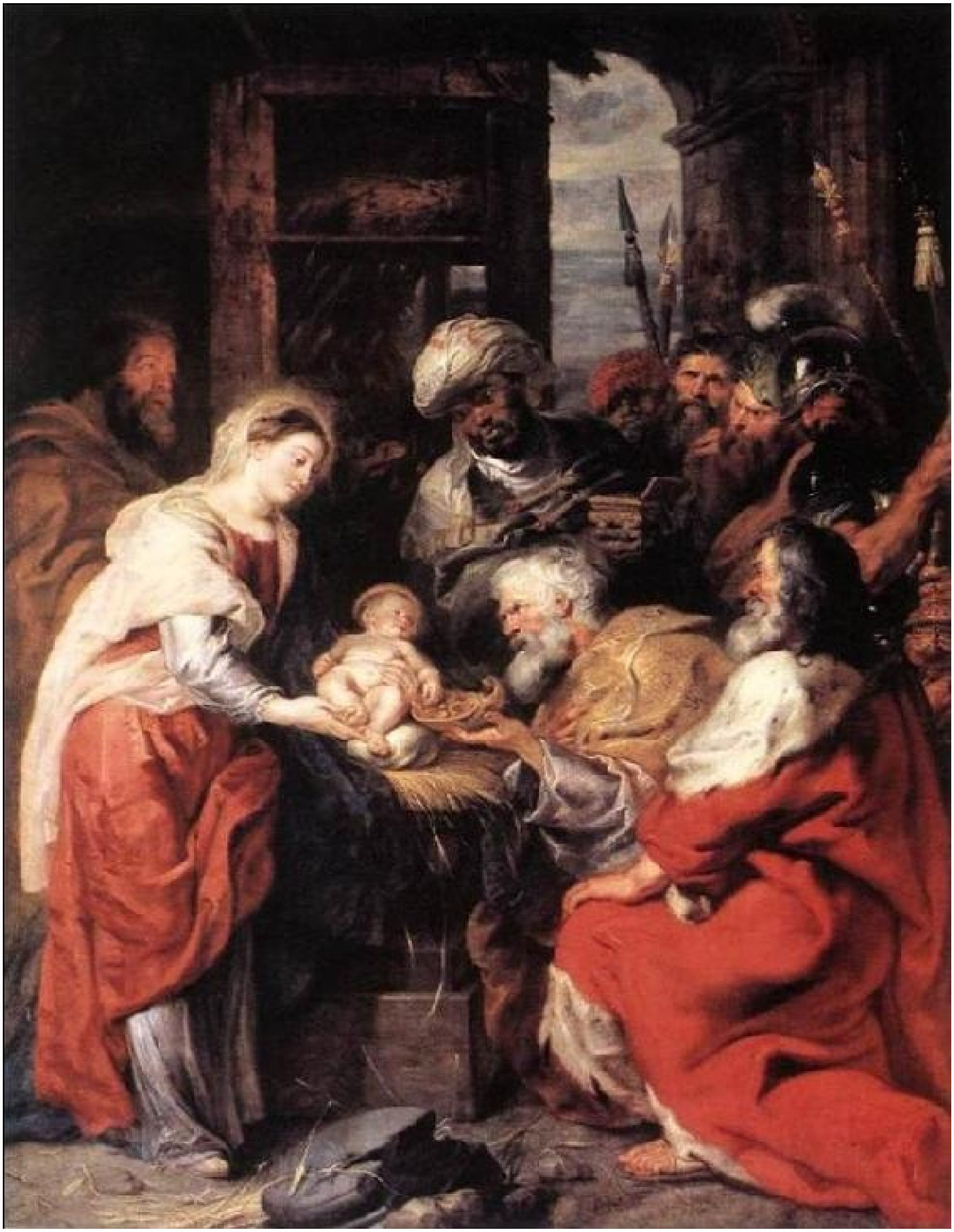
Triumph of Church over Fury, Discord, and Hate

c.1628
86 x 91 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



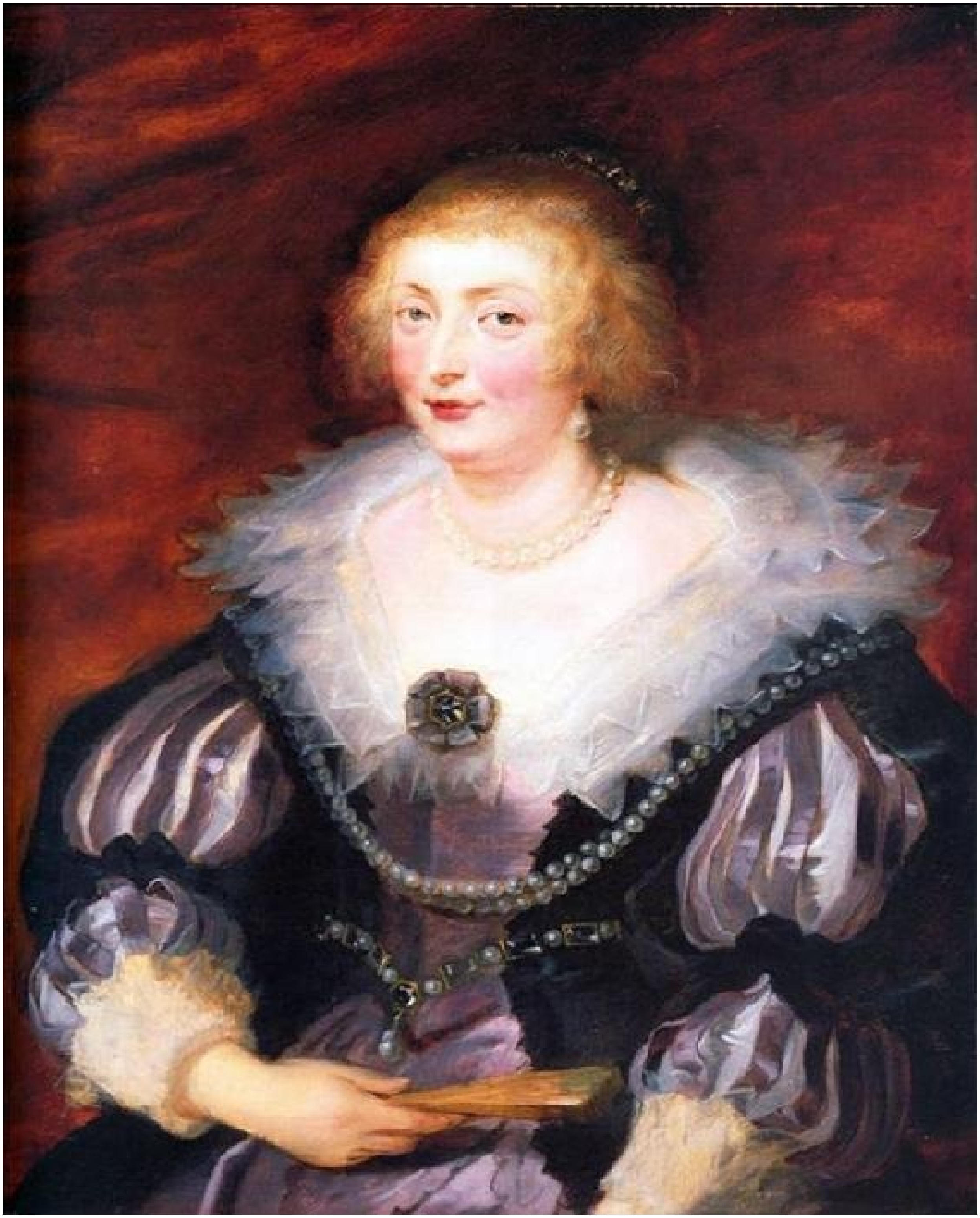
Adoration of the Magi

1629
283 x 219 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France

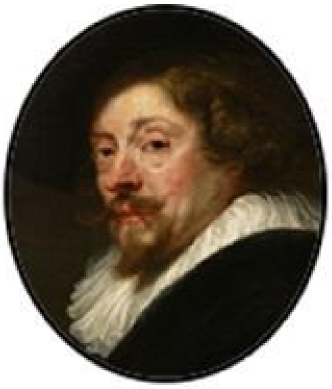


Catherine Manners, Duchess of Buckingham

c.1629
78 x 65 cm
Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

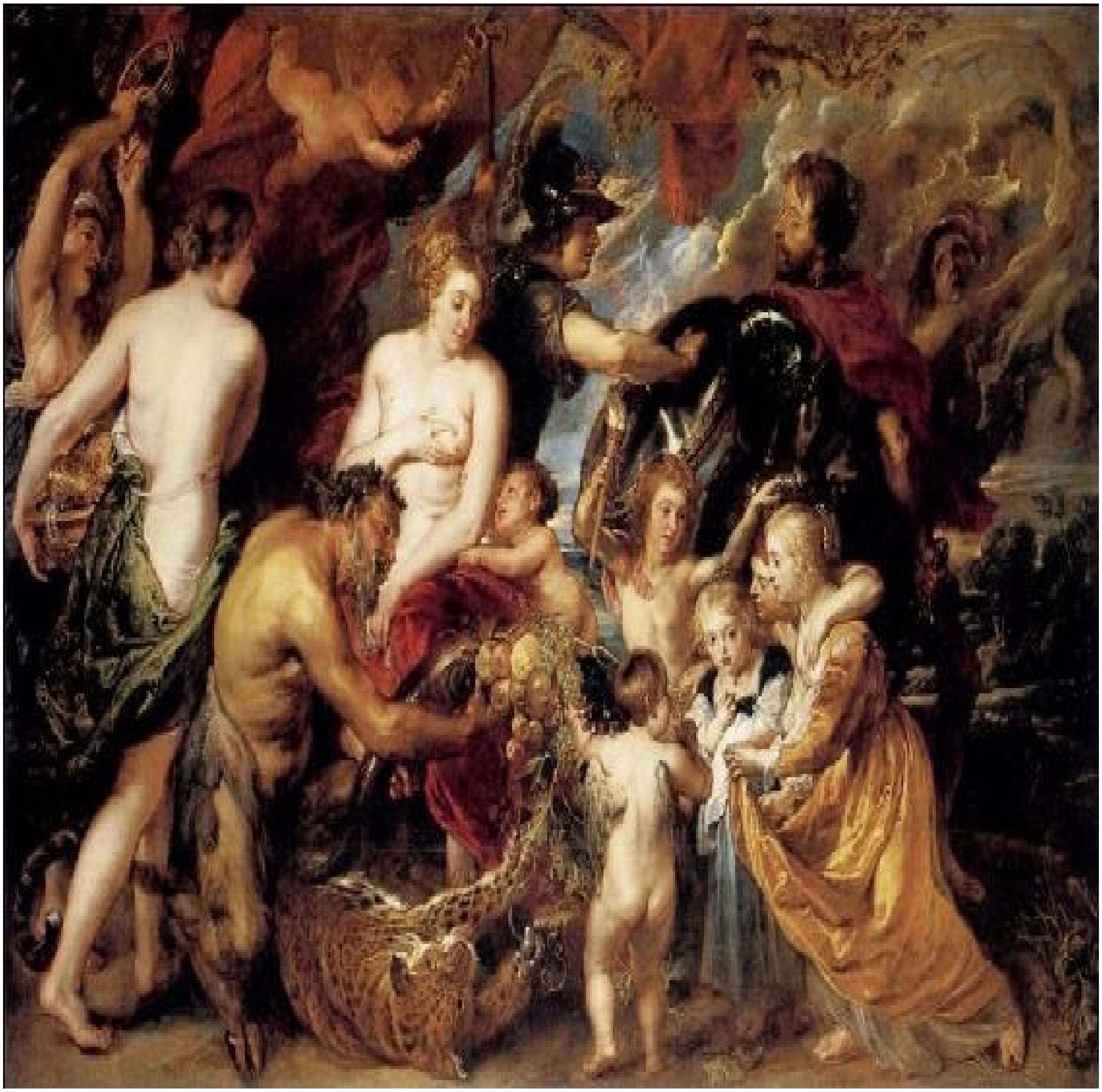


1630’s



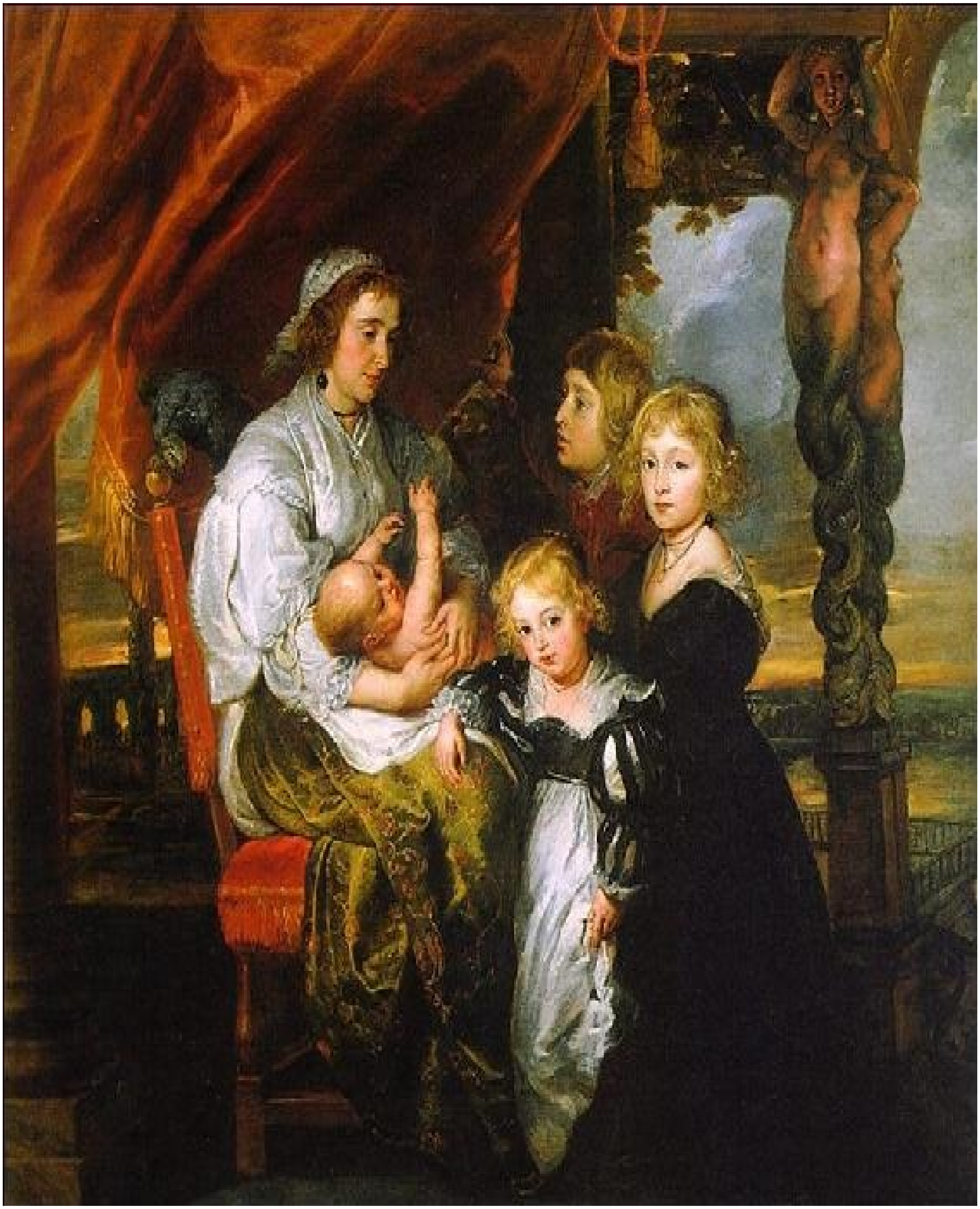
Allegory on the Blessings of Peace

1630
204 x 298 cm
National Gallery, London



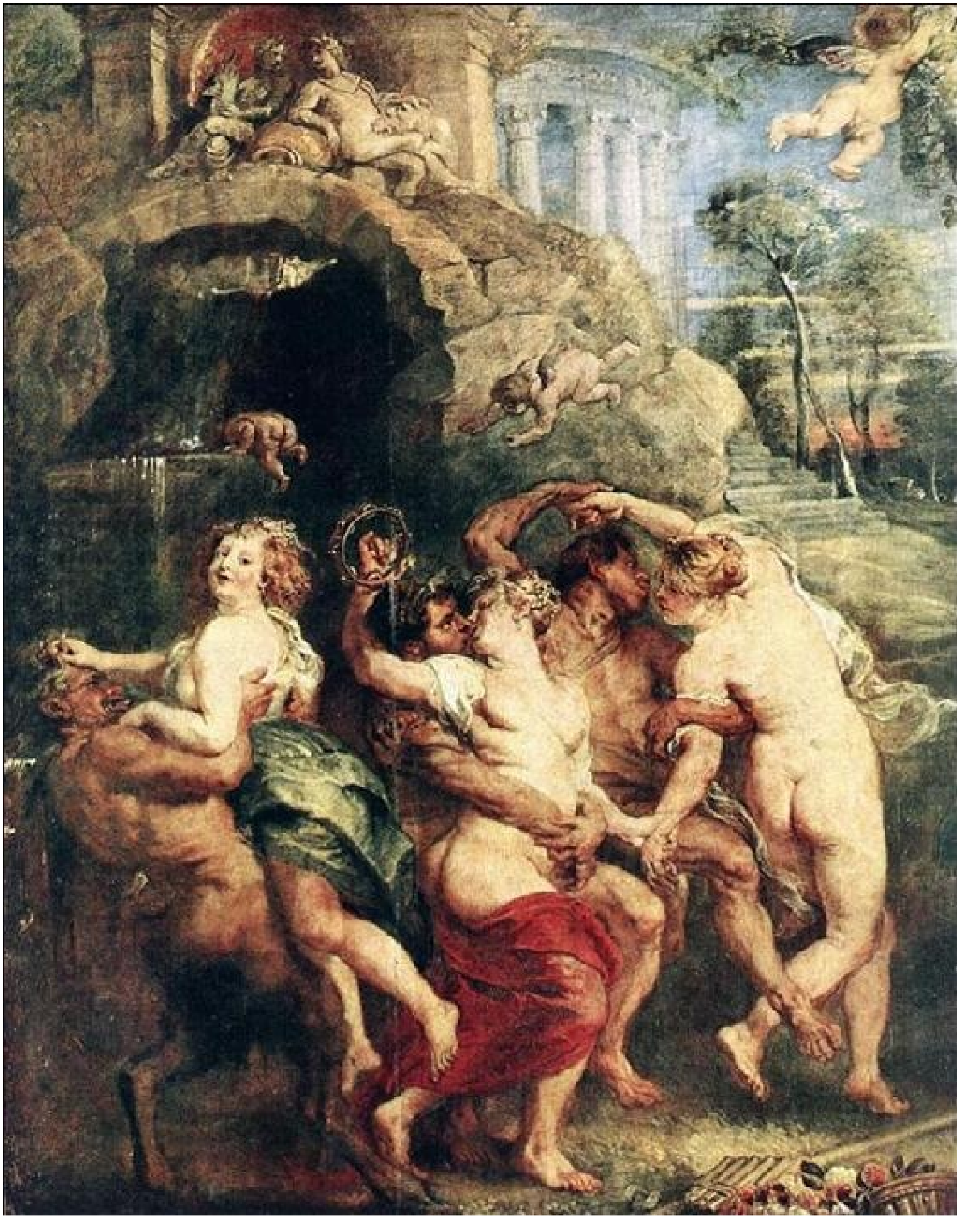
Deborah Kip, Wife of Sir Balthasar Gerbier, and Her Children

1630
166 x 178 cm



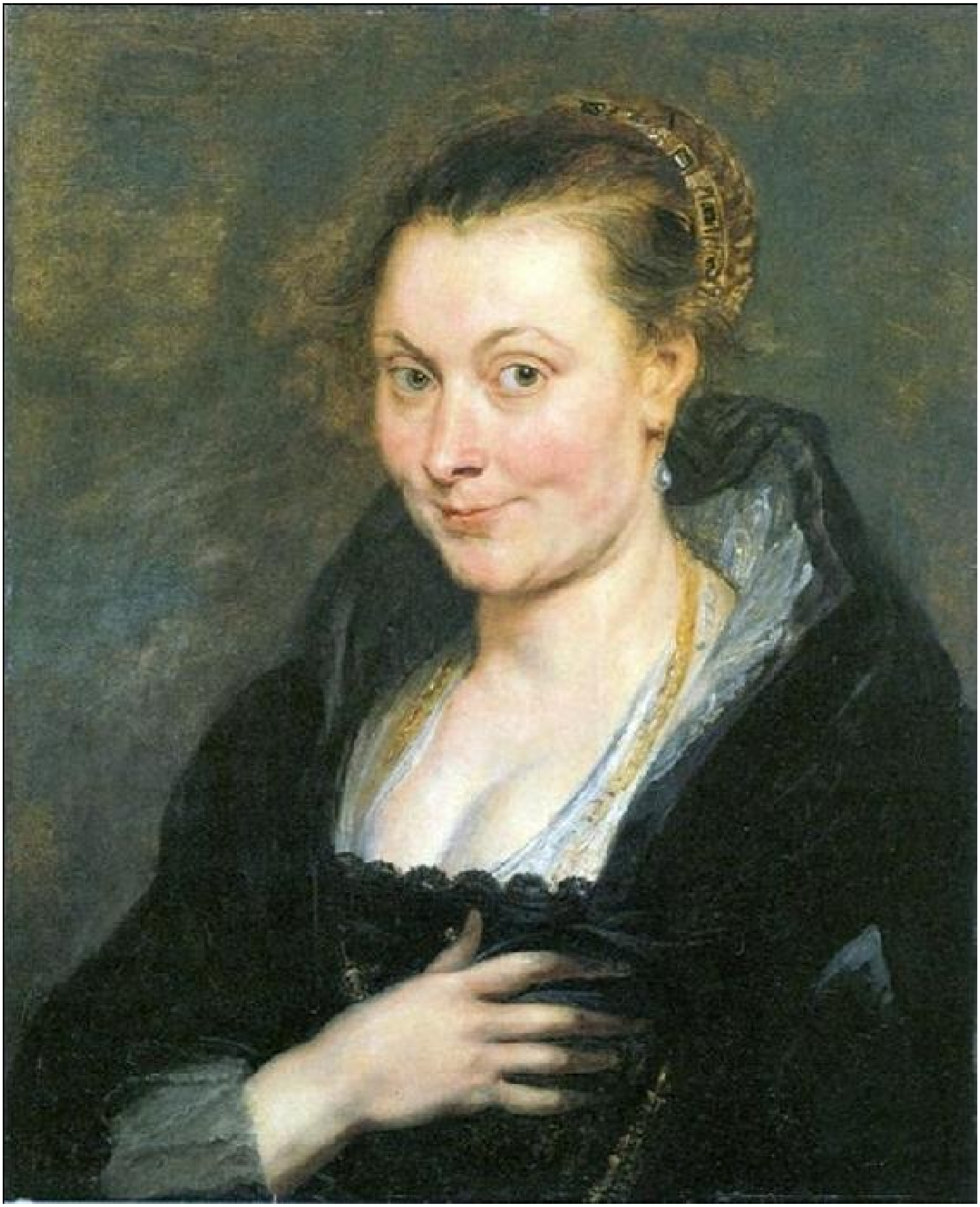
Feast of Venus

1630



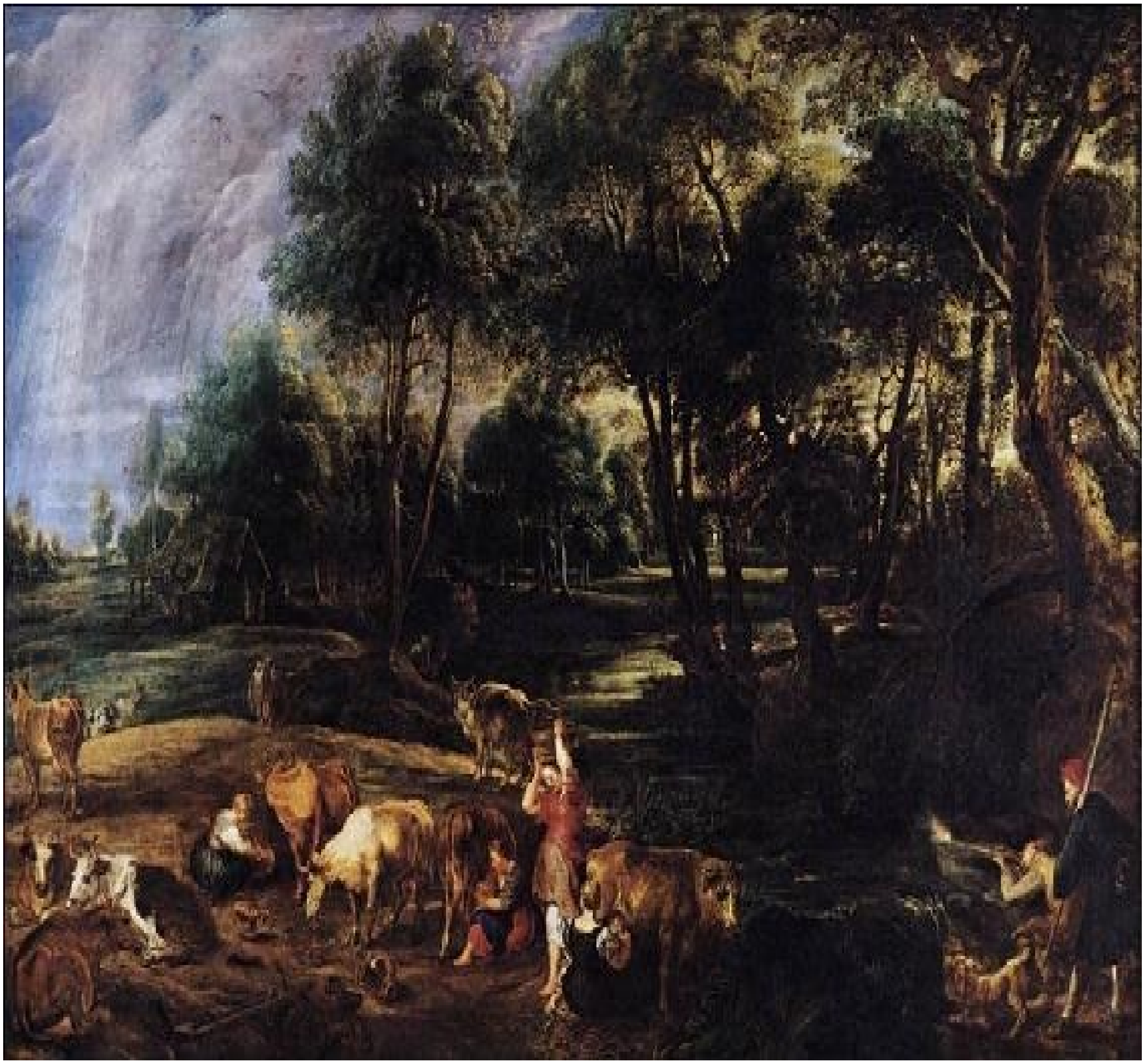
Isabella Brant

c.1630



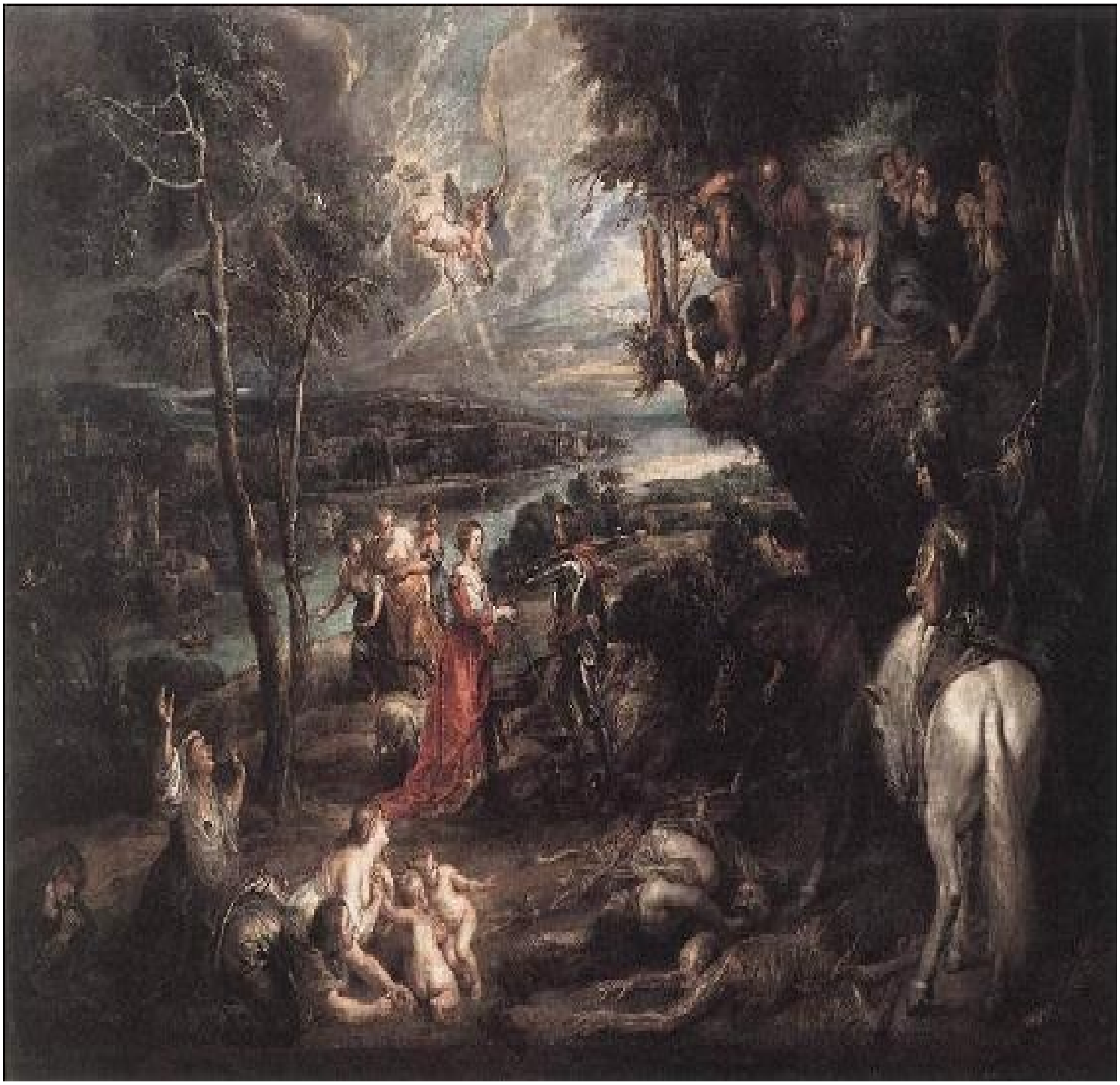
Landscape with Cows and Wildfowlers

c.1630
113 x 176 cm
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, Germany



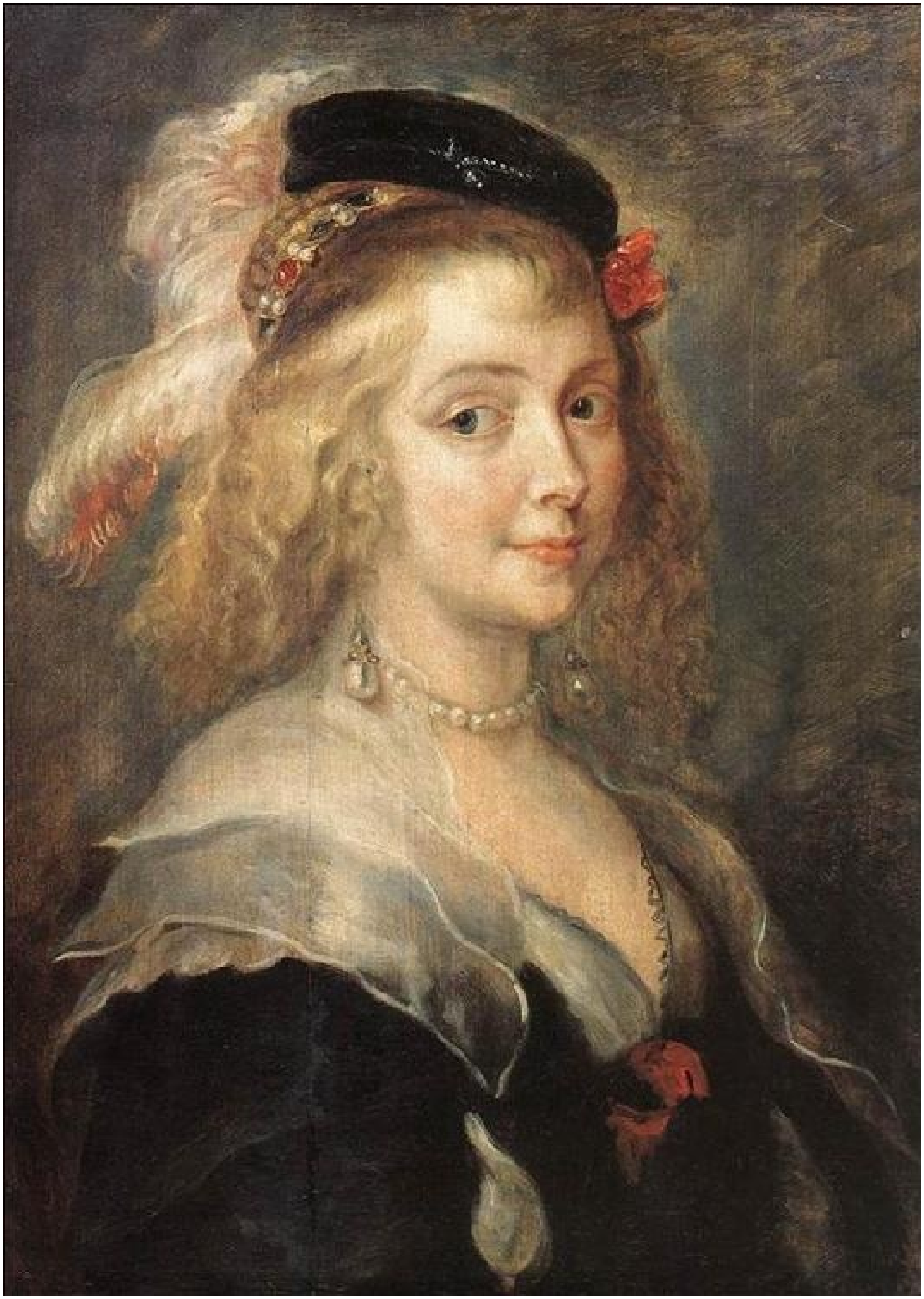
Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon

c.1630
152 x 226 cm
Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, London



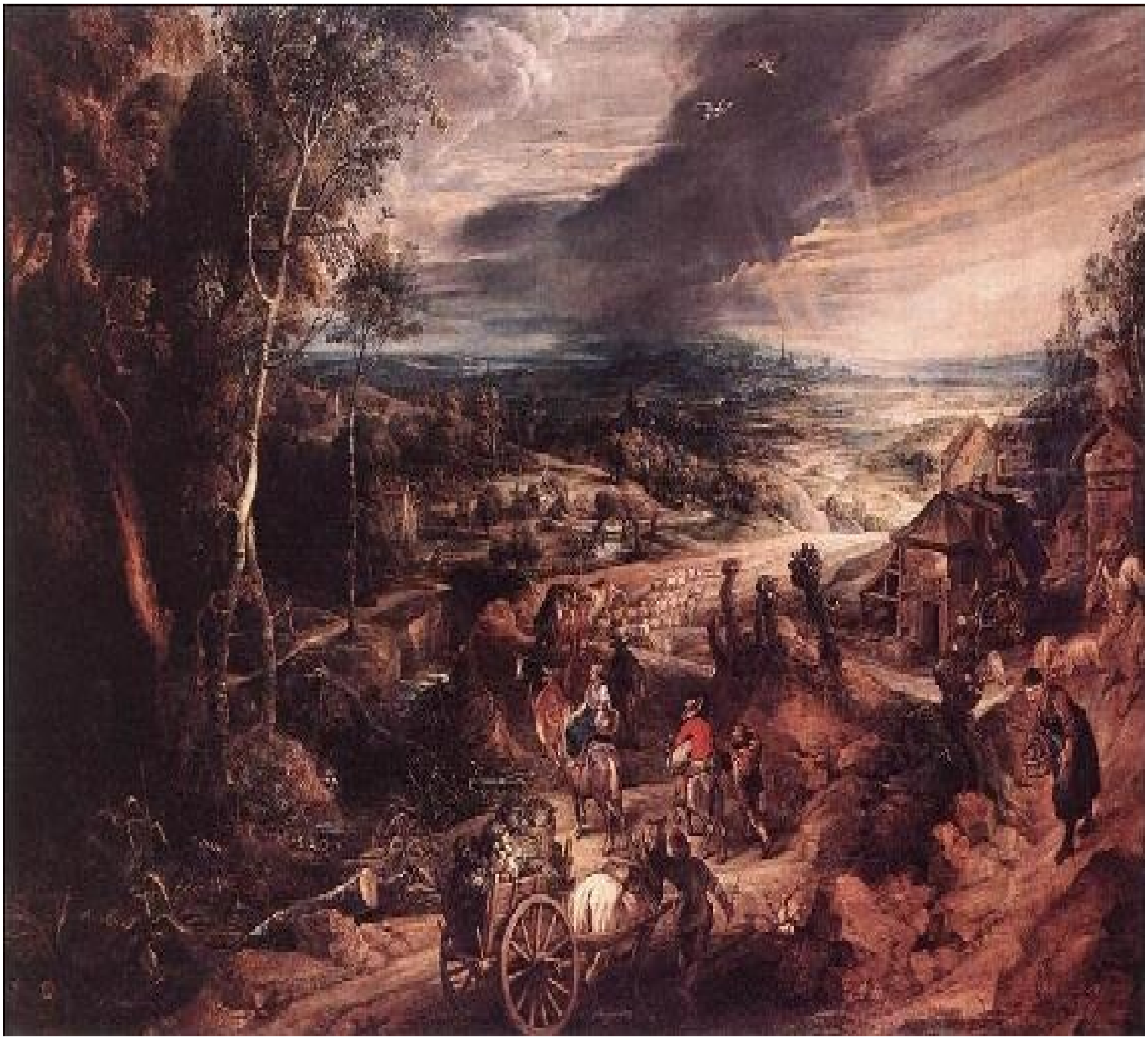
Portrait of Helena Fourment

c.1630
Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium



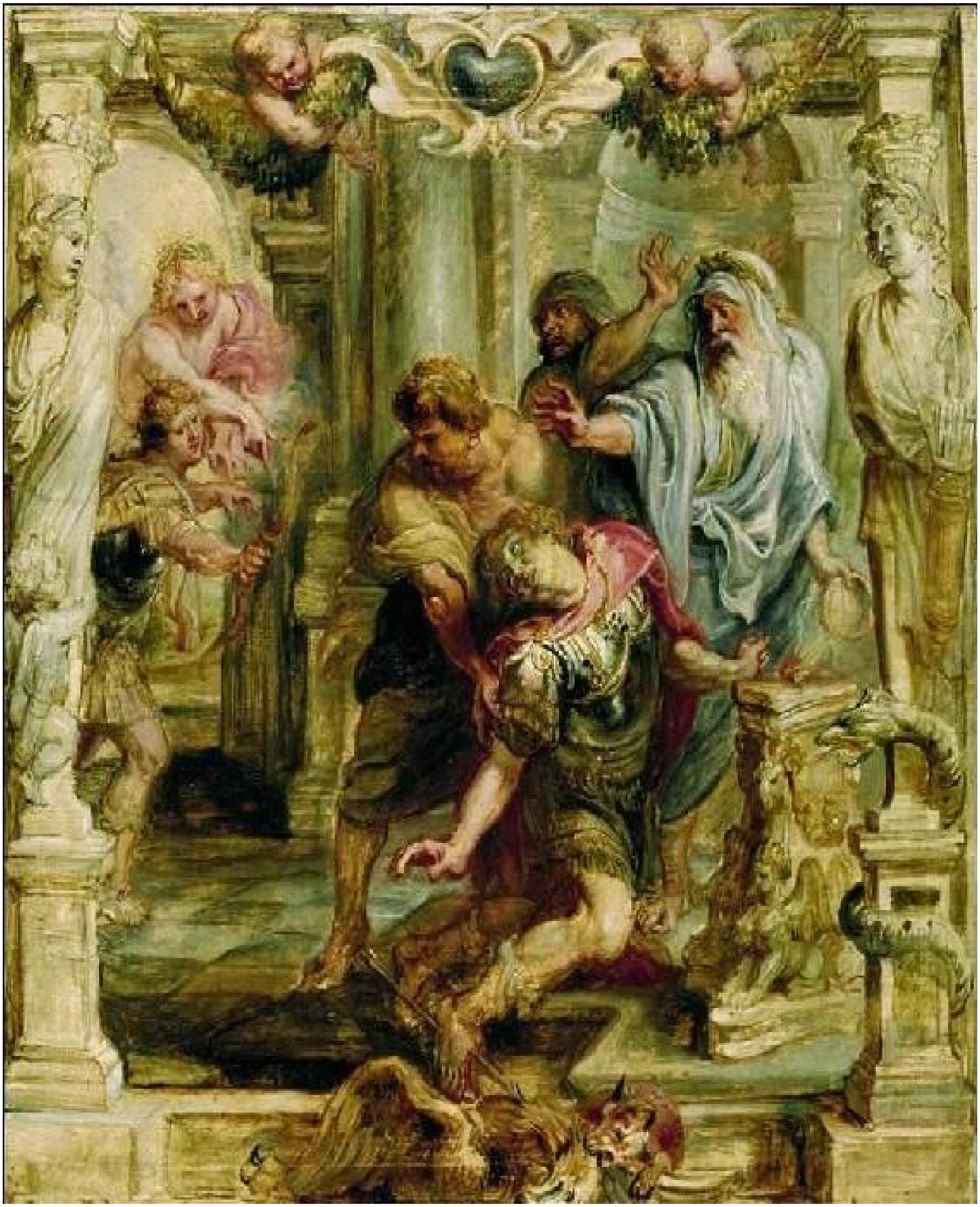
Summer

c.1630
143 x 223 cm
Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, London



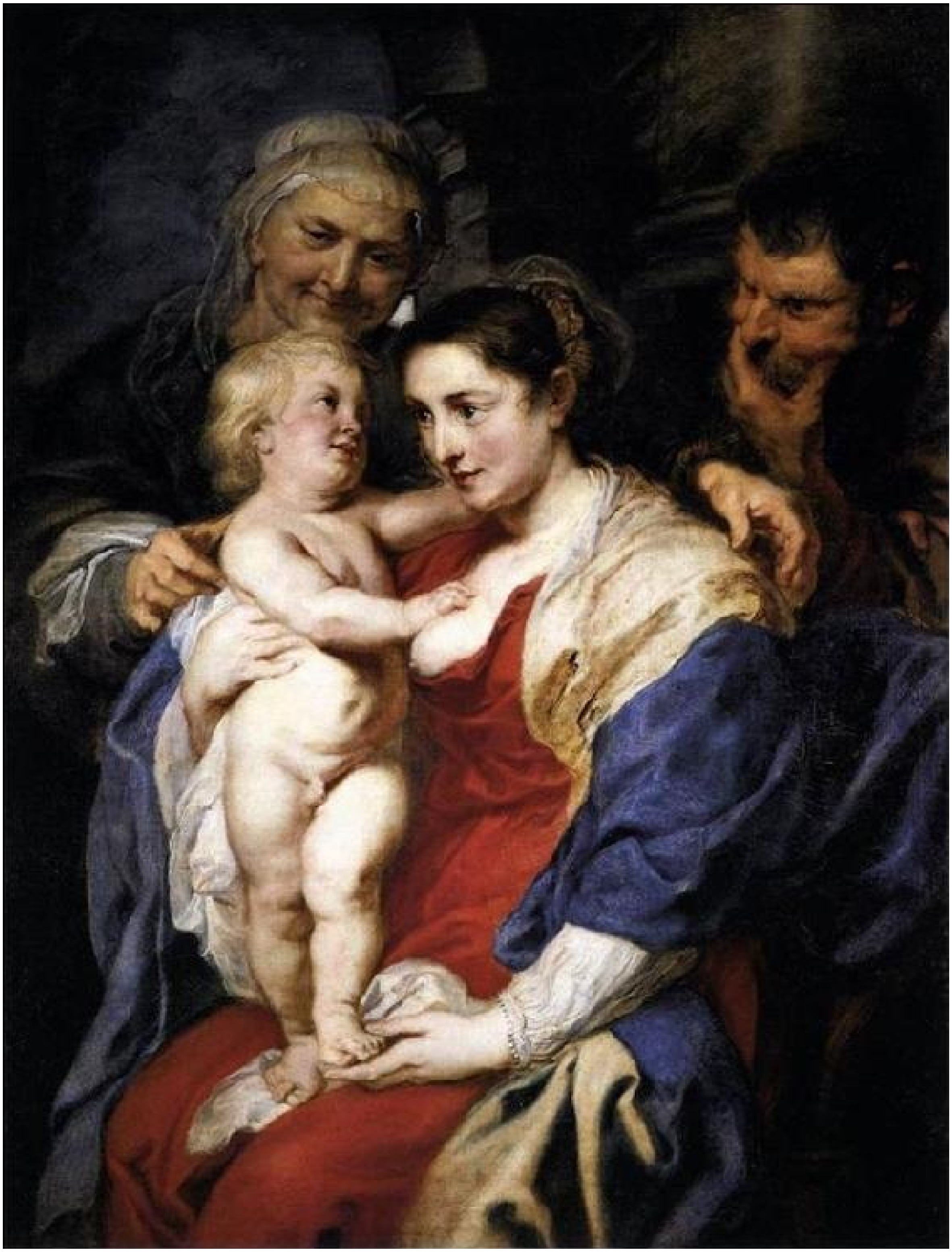
The Death of Achilles

c.1630



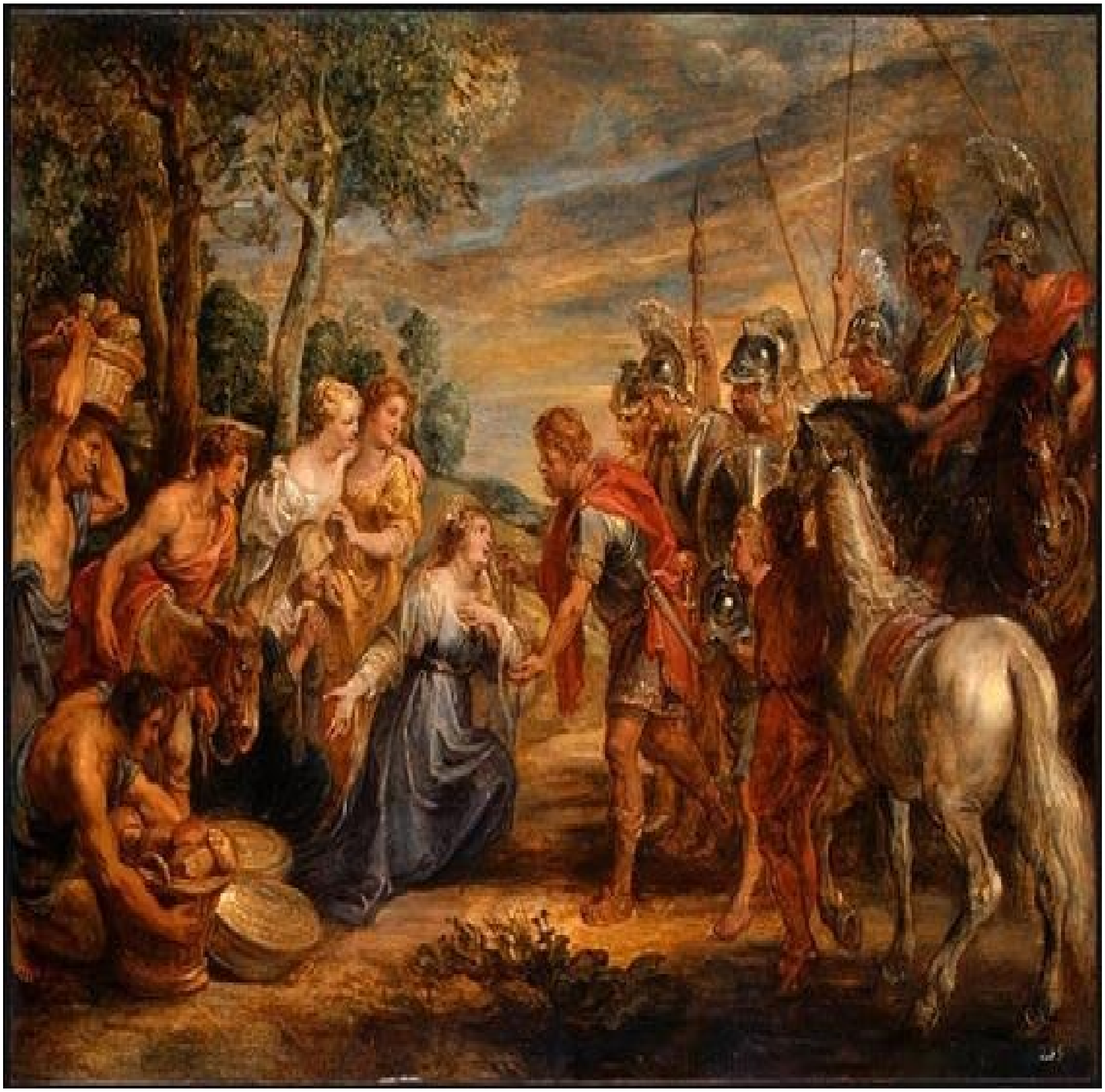
The Holy Family with St. Anne

c.1630
115 x 90 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



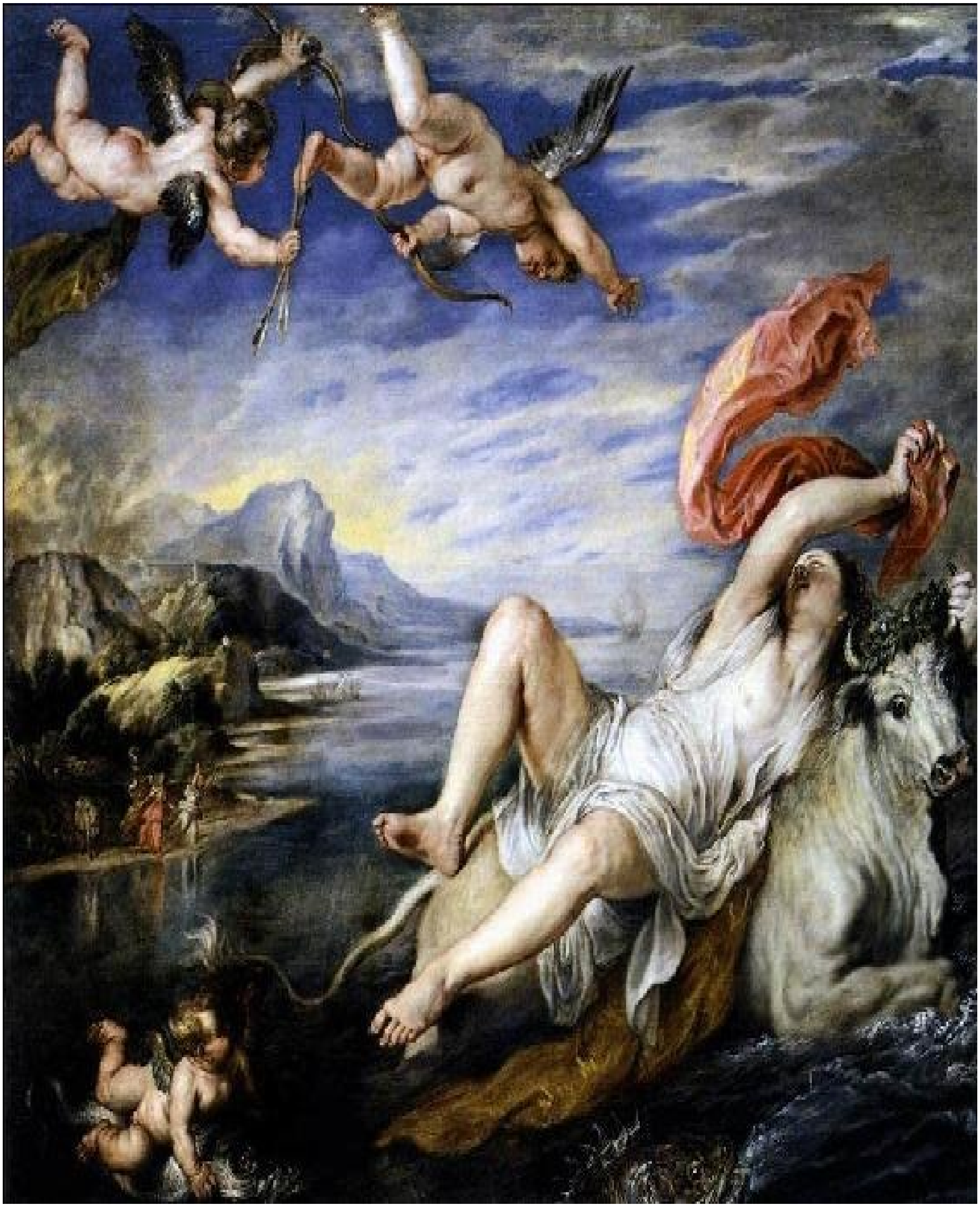
The Meeting of David and Abigail

c.1630
45 x 66 cm



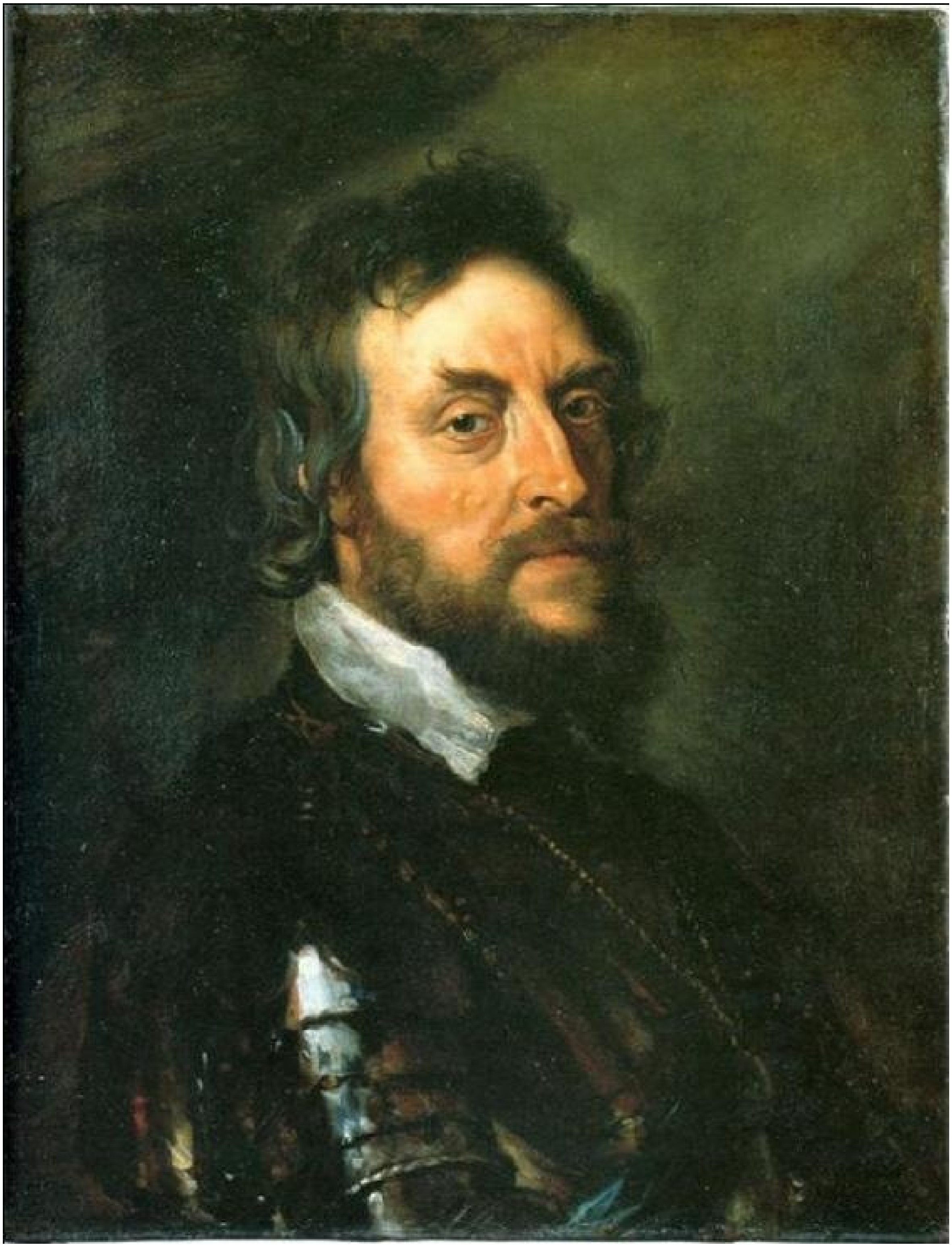
The Rape of Europa

c.1630
181 x 200 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



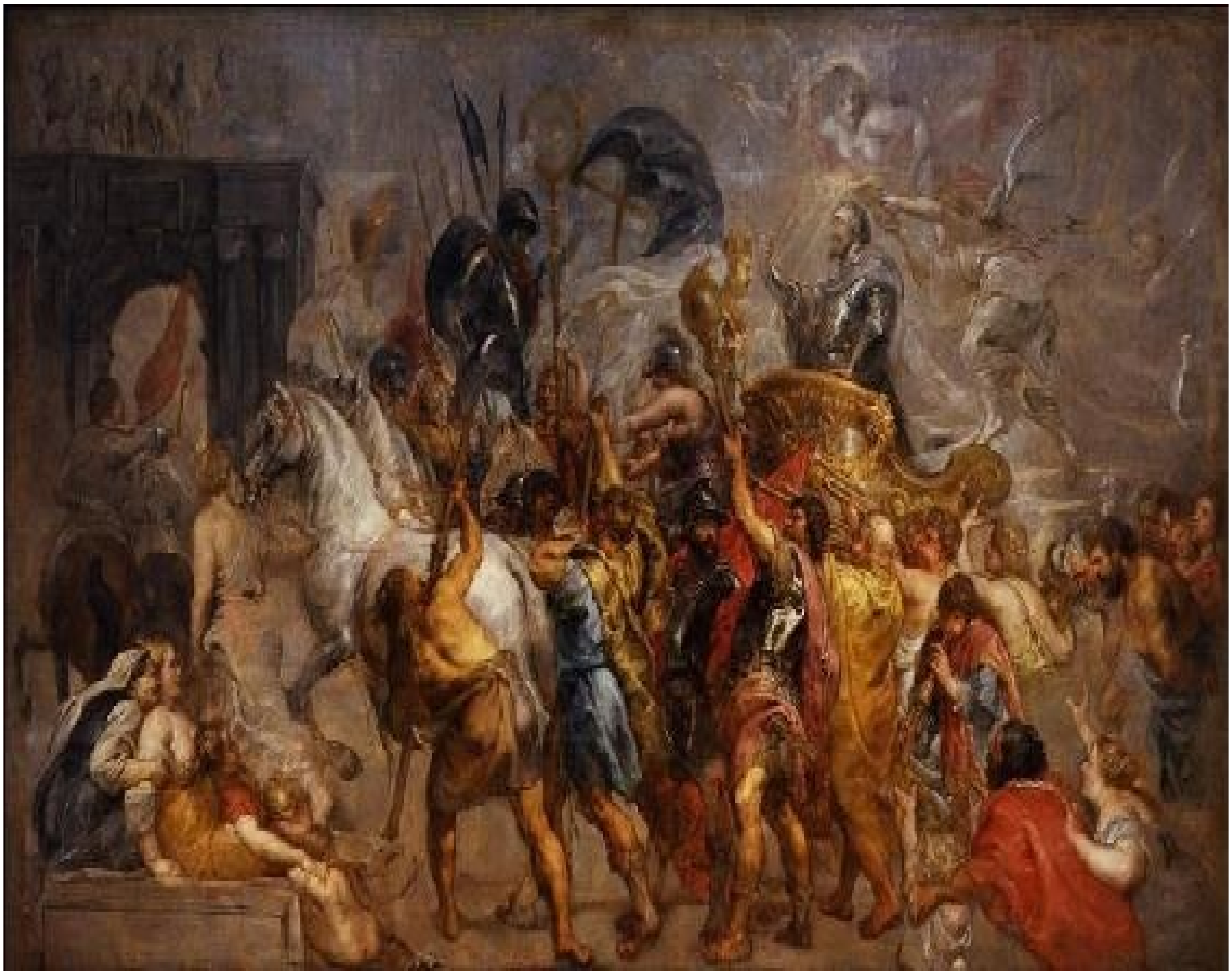
Thomas Howard, Second Count of Arundel

c.1630
67 x 52 cm



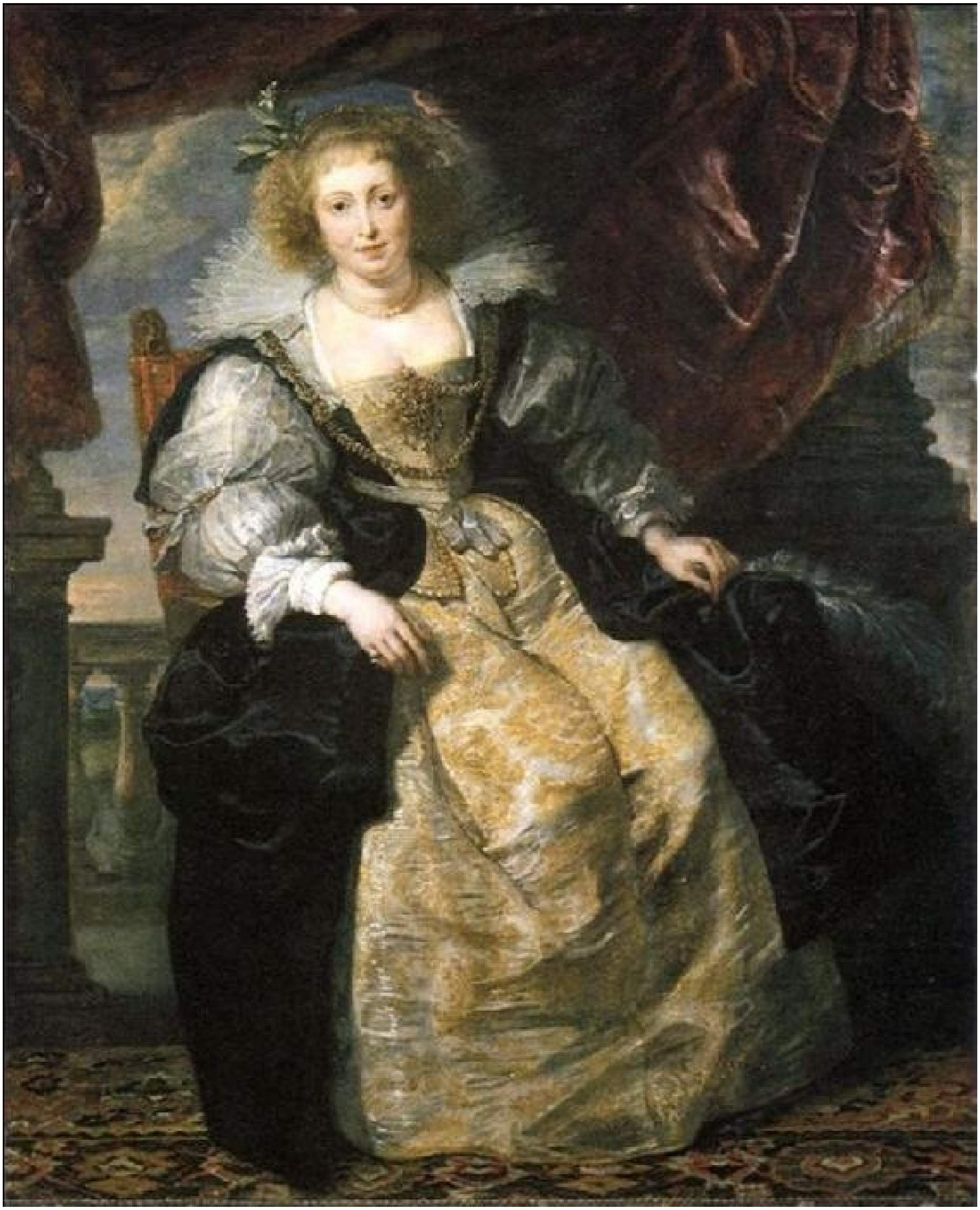
Triumphal Entry of Henry IV into Paris

1630
380 x 692 cm
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy



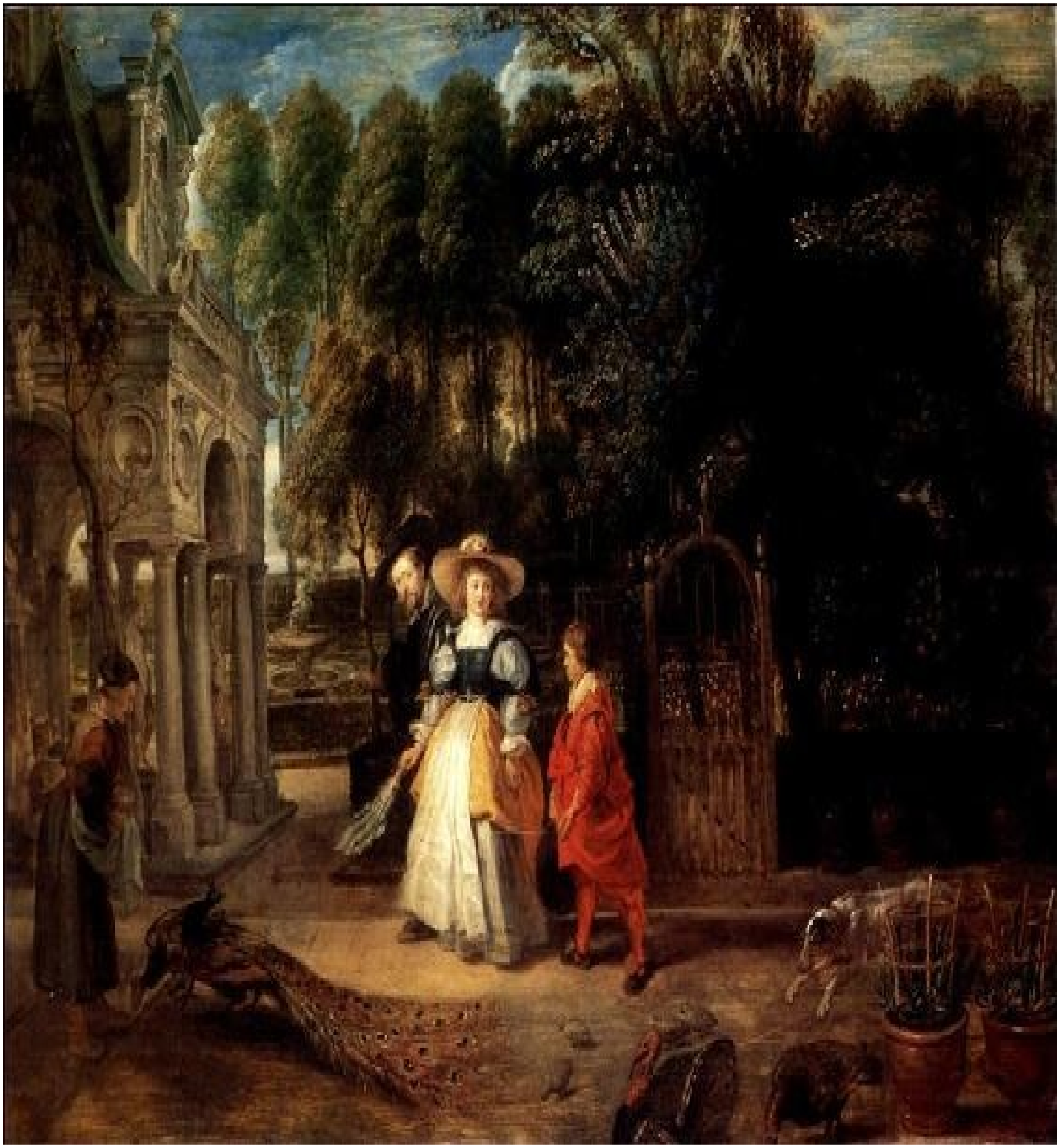
Helena Fourment

c.1631



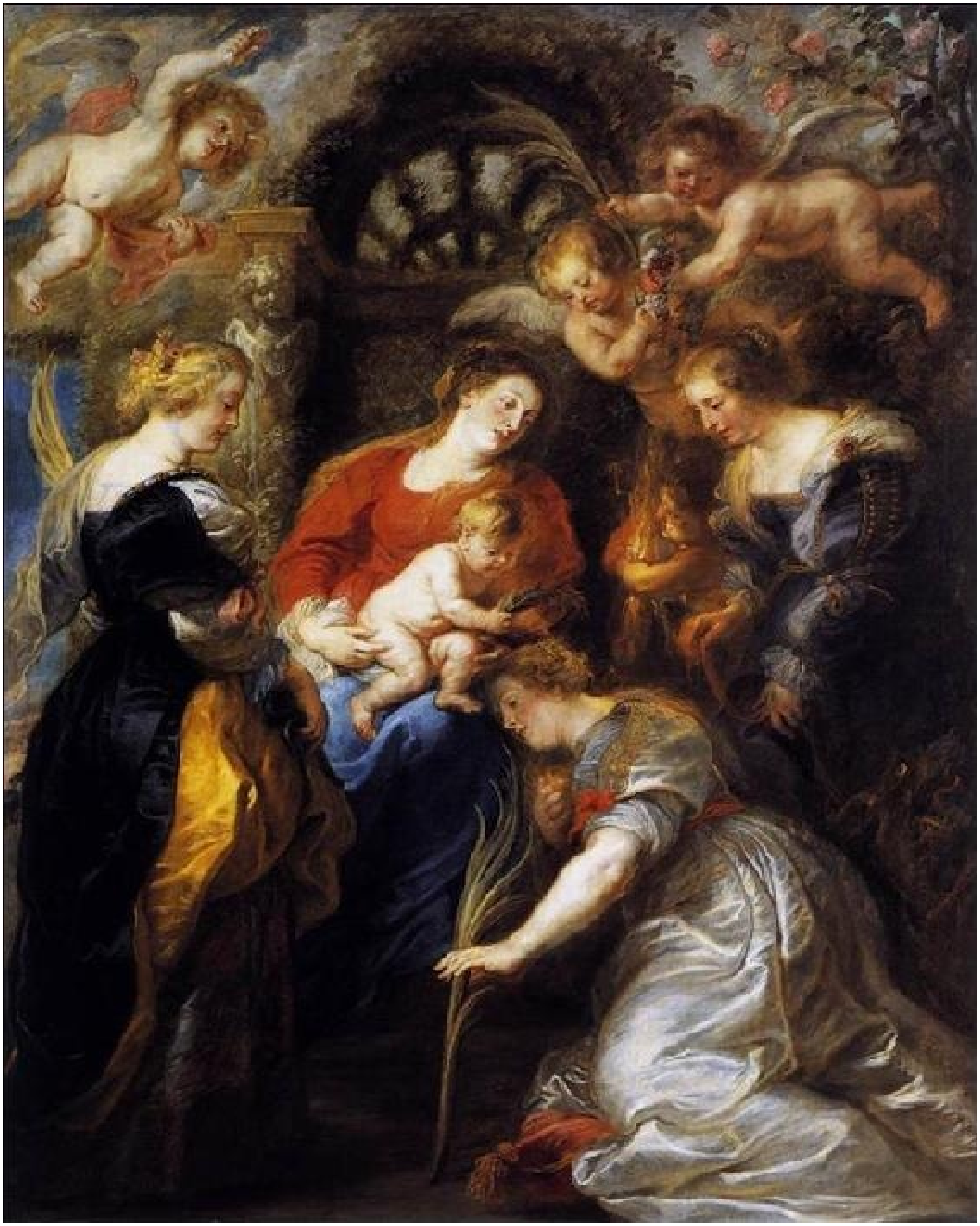
Rubens and Helene Fourment in the Garden

c.1631
Private Collection



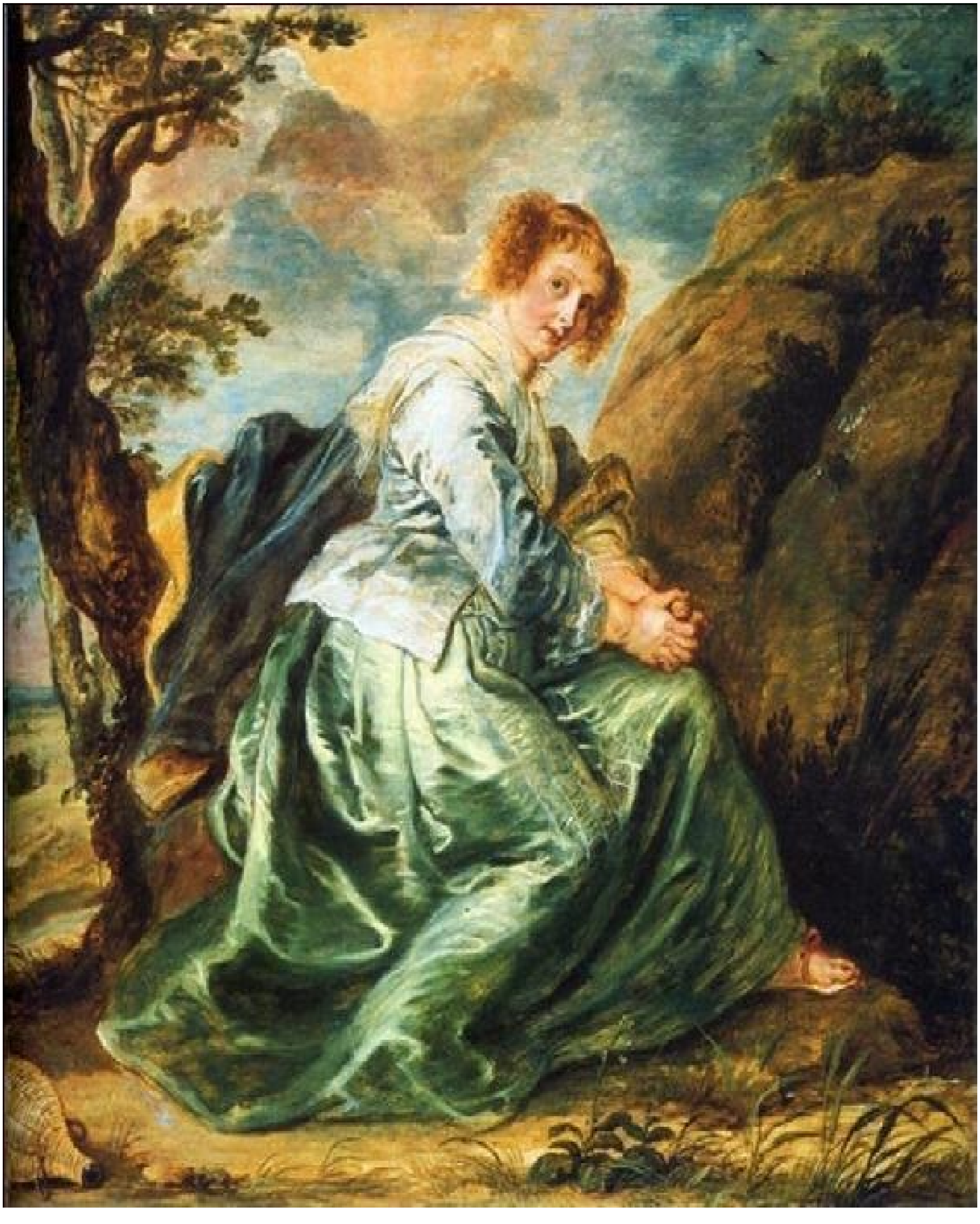
The Crowning of St. Catherine

1631
266 x 214 cm
The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio, USA



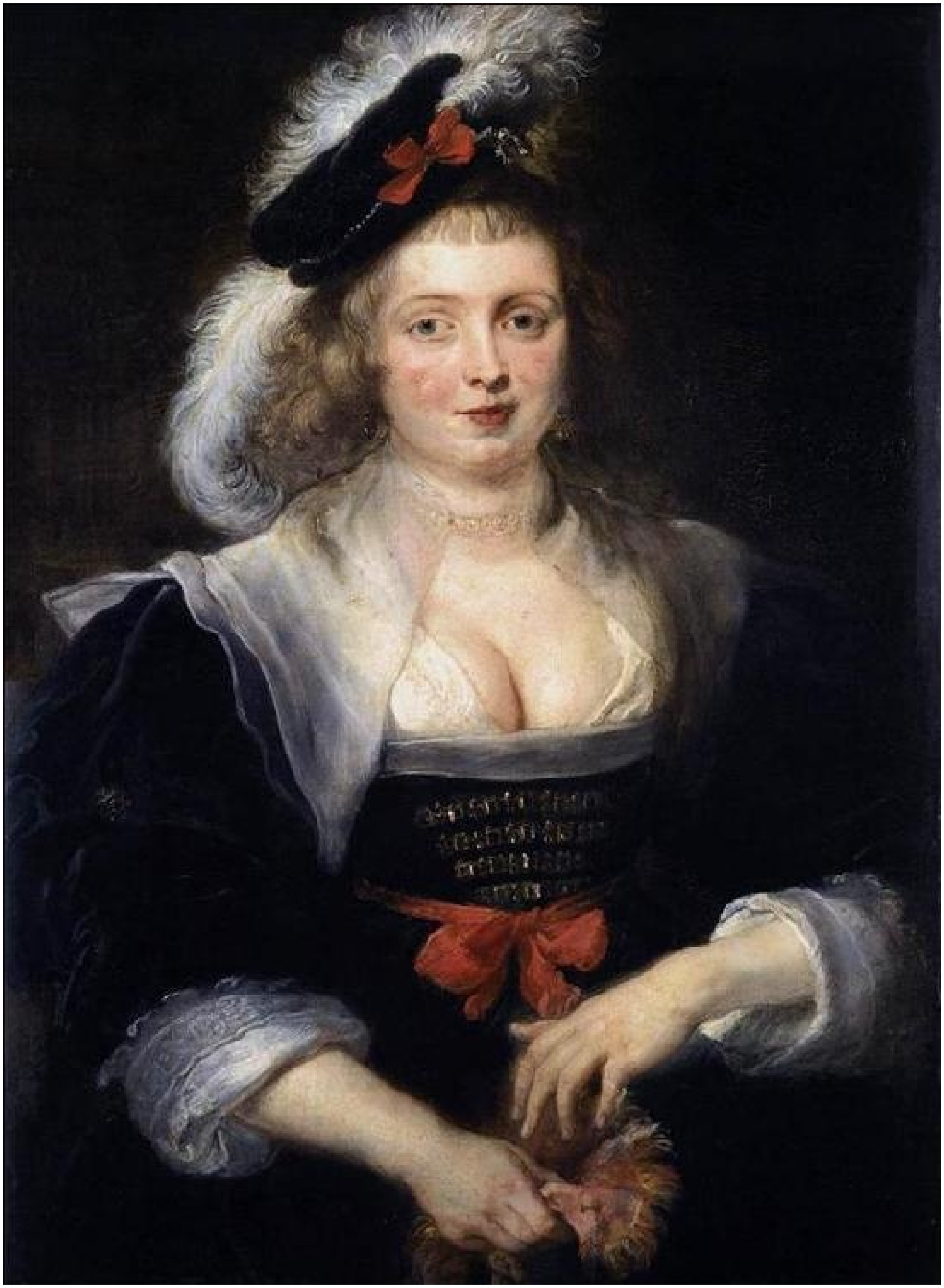
Hagar in the Desert

c.1632
73 x 72 cm
Dulwich Picture Gallery, London



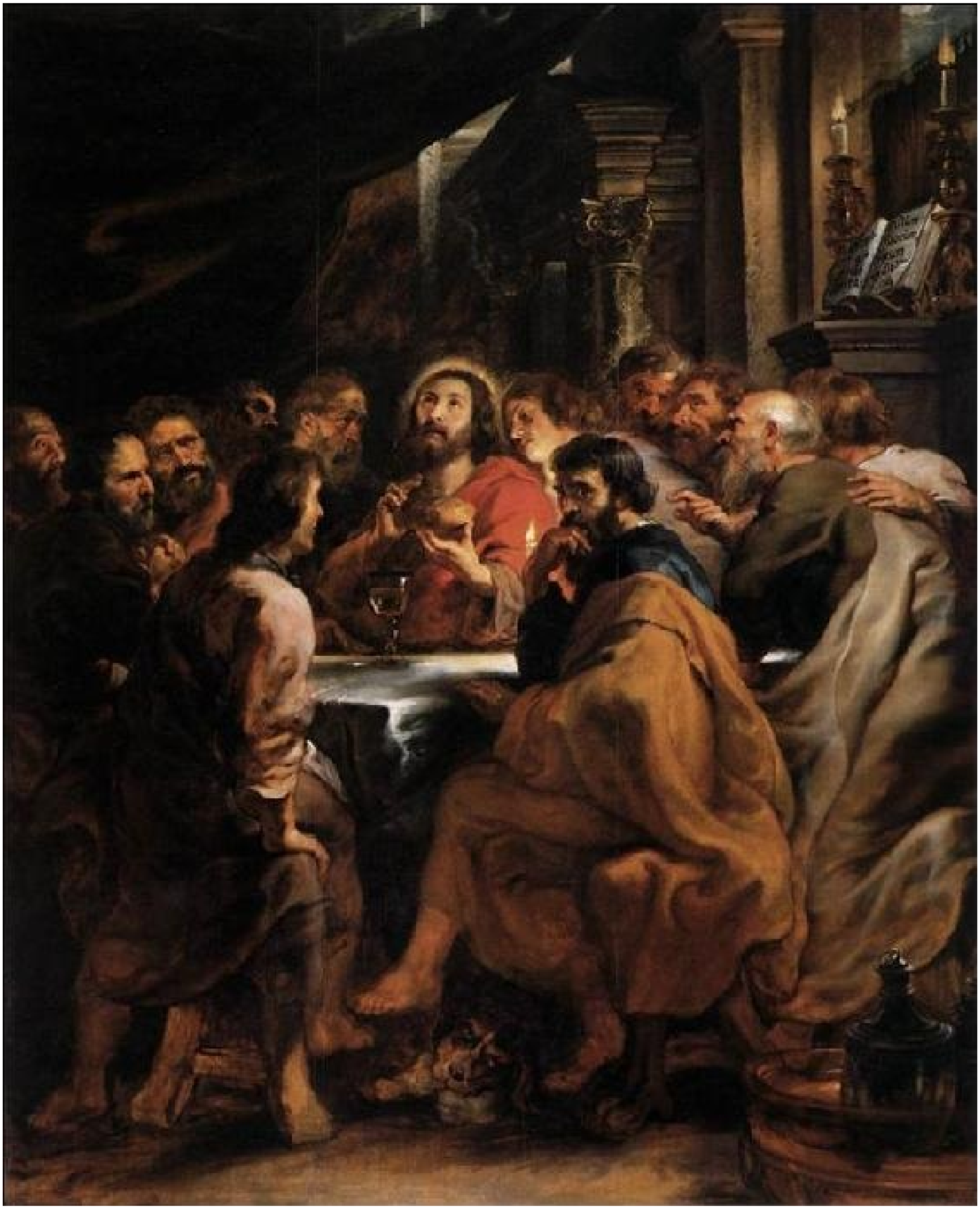
Portrait of Helene Fourment with Gloves

c.1632
97 x 69 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



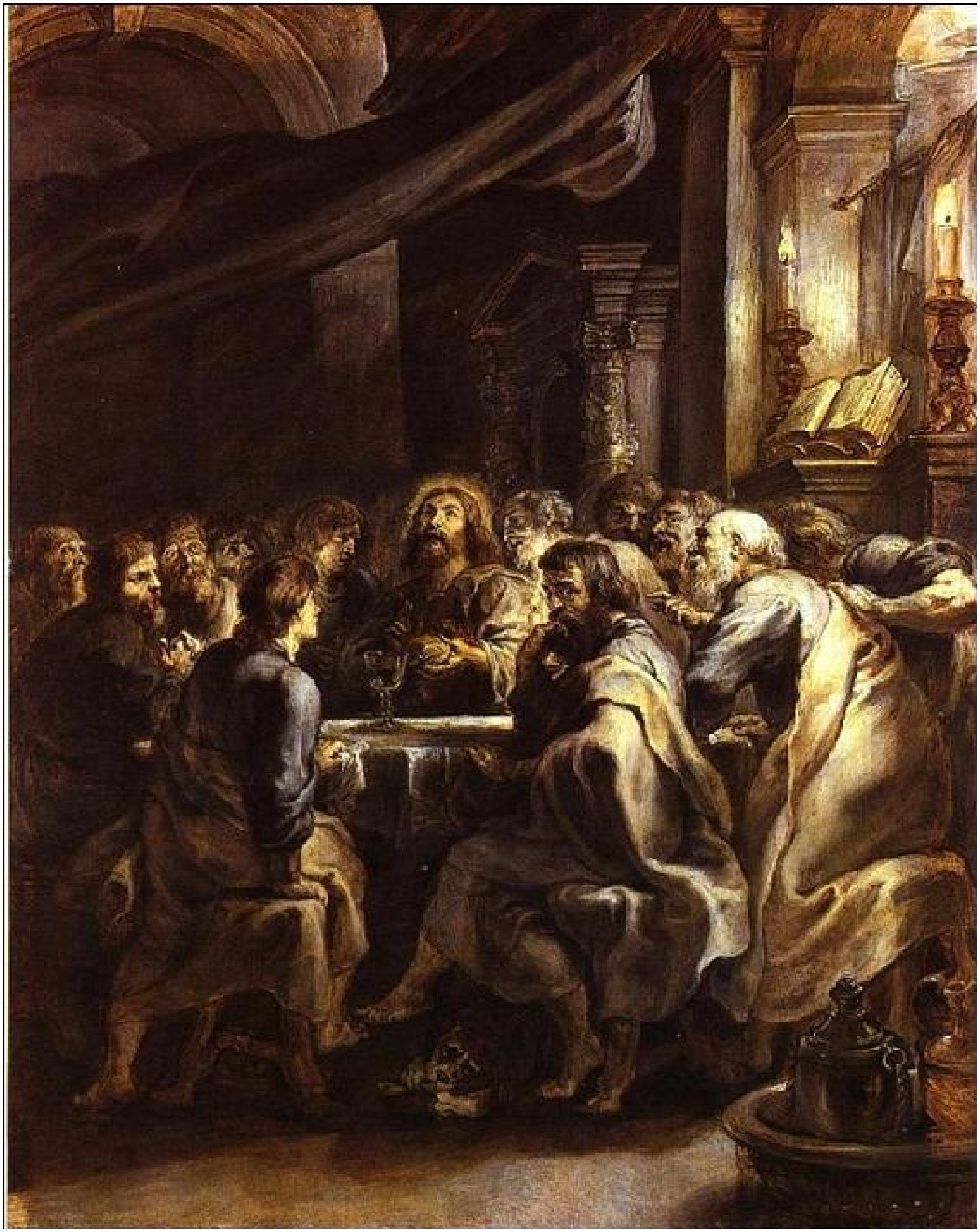
The Last Supper

1632
304 x 250 cm
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Italy



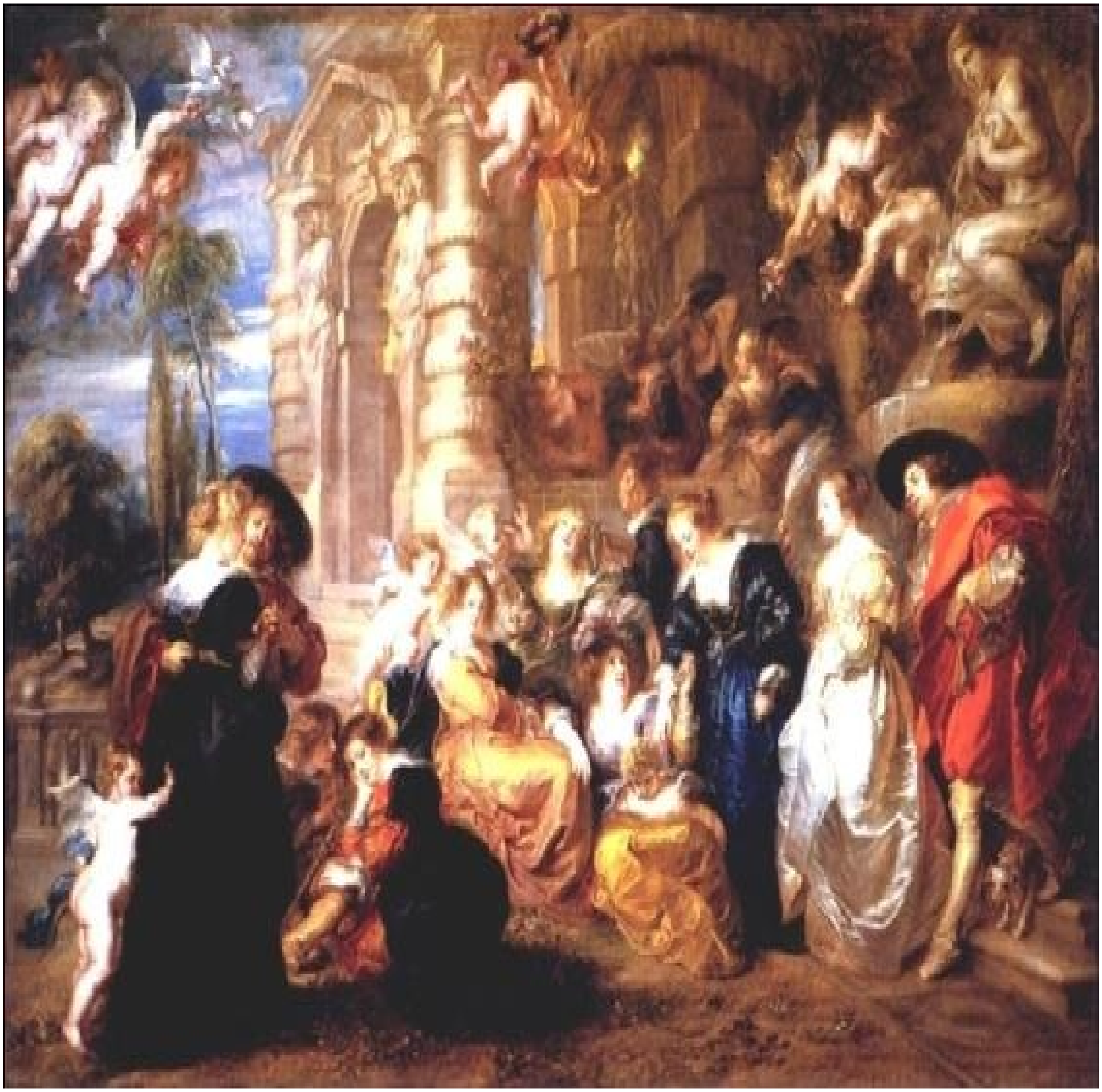
The Last Supper

c.1632
61.5 x 48.5 cm
Private Collection



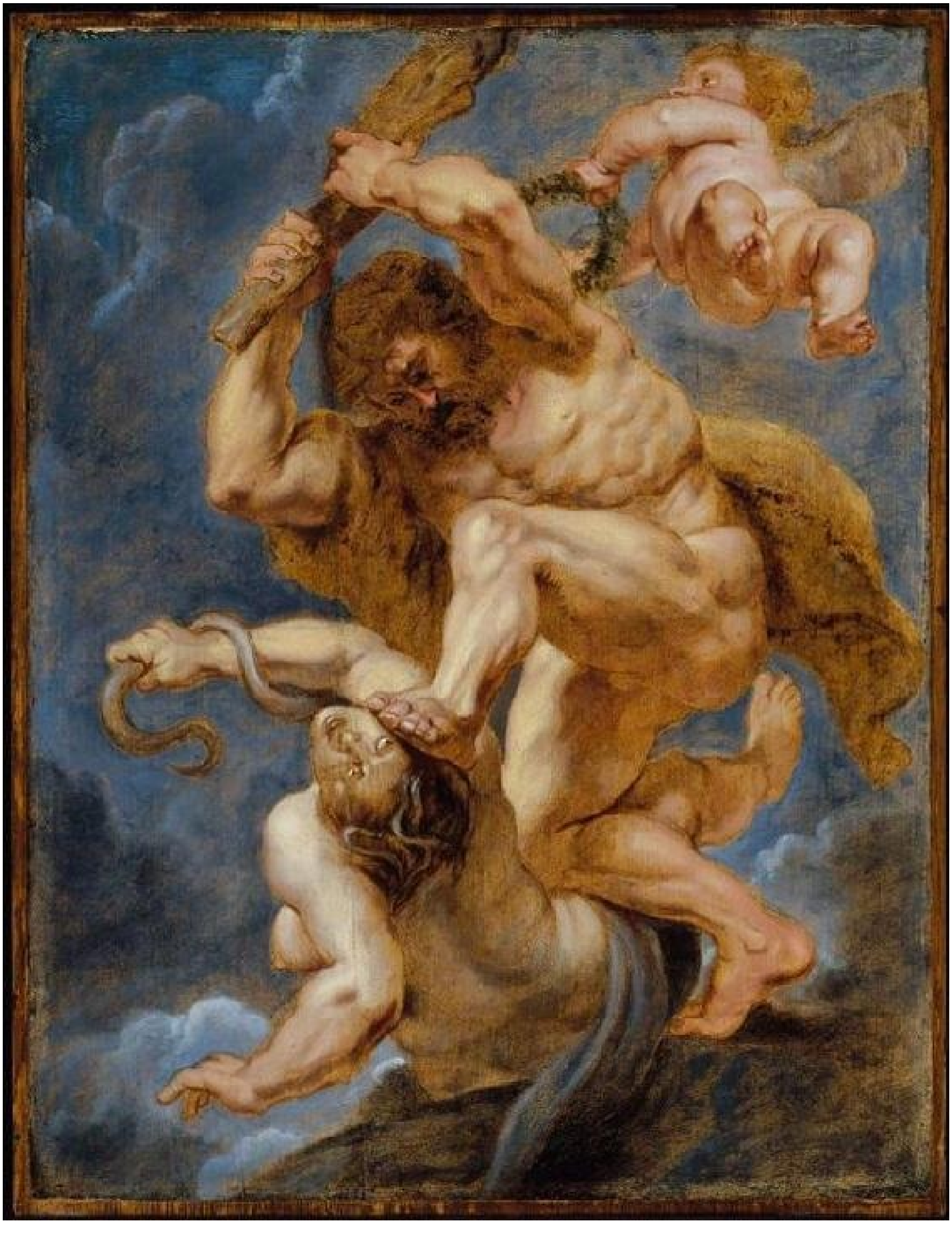
Garden of Love

c.1633
198 x 283 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



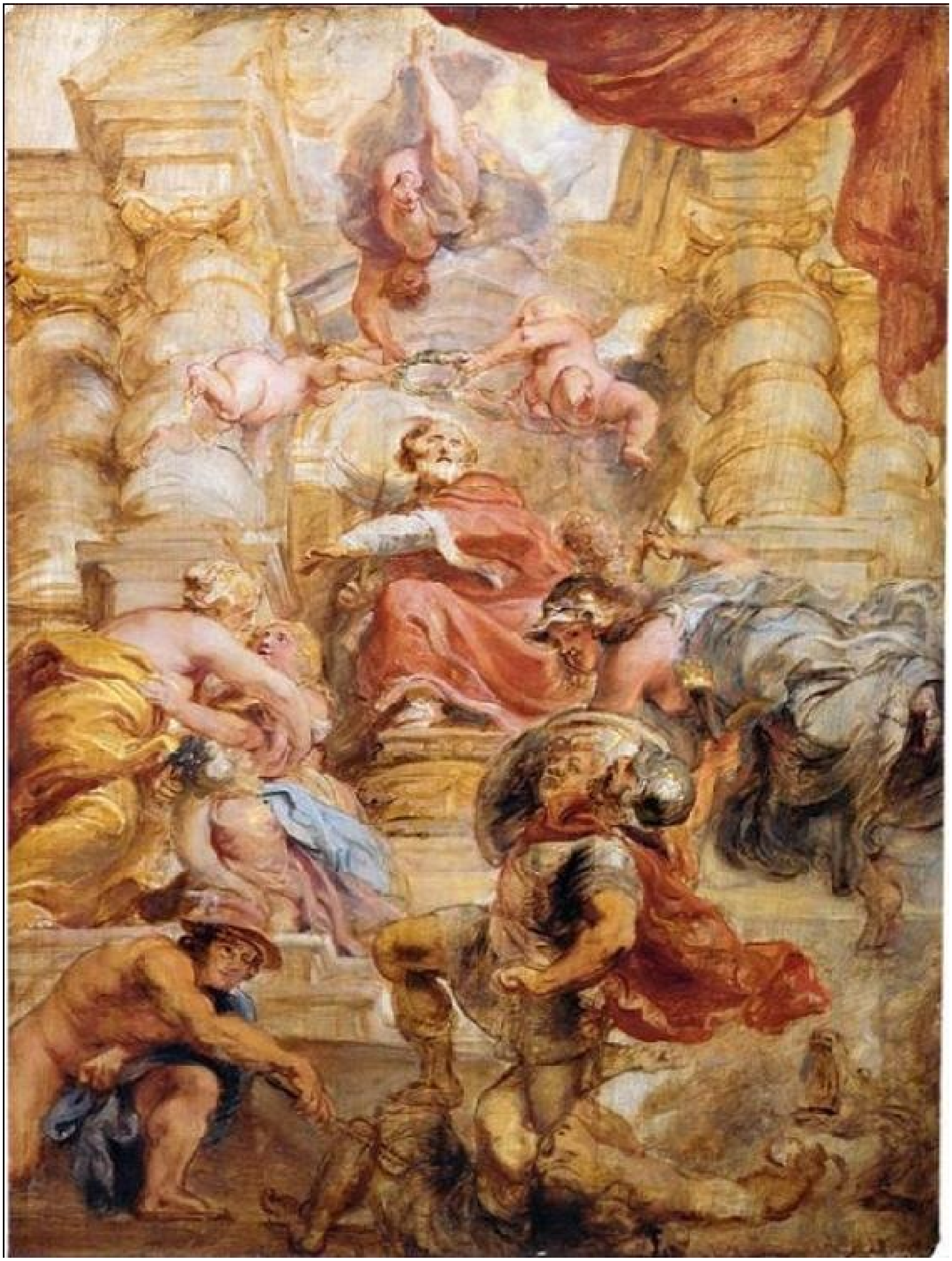
Hercules as Heroic Virtue Overcoming Discord

1633
64 x 49 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA



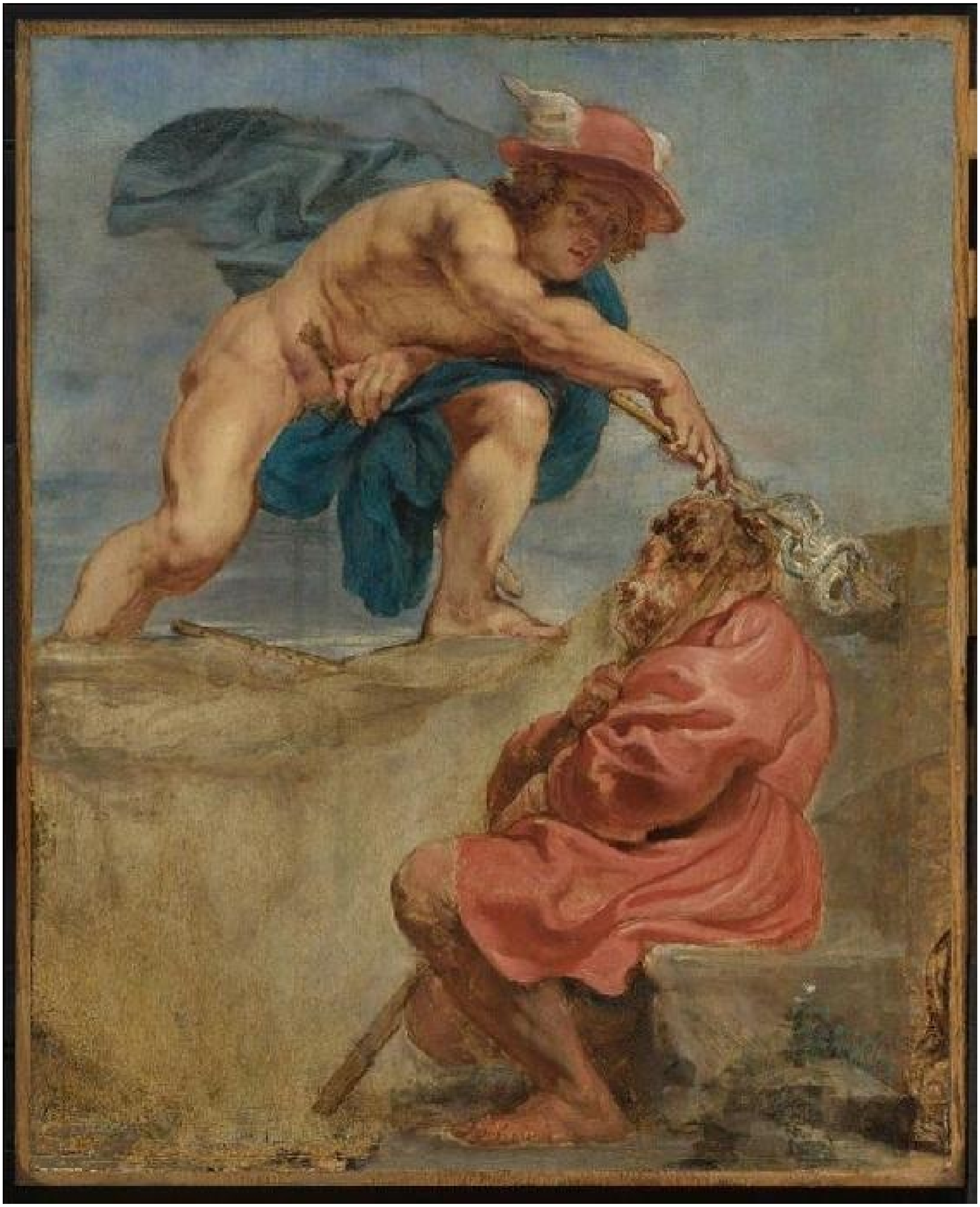
King James I of England

c.1633
64 x 47 cm



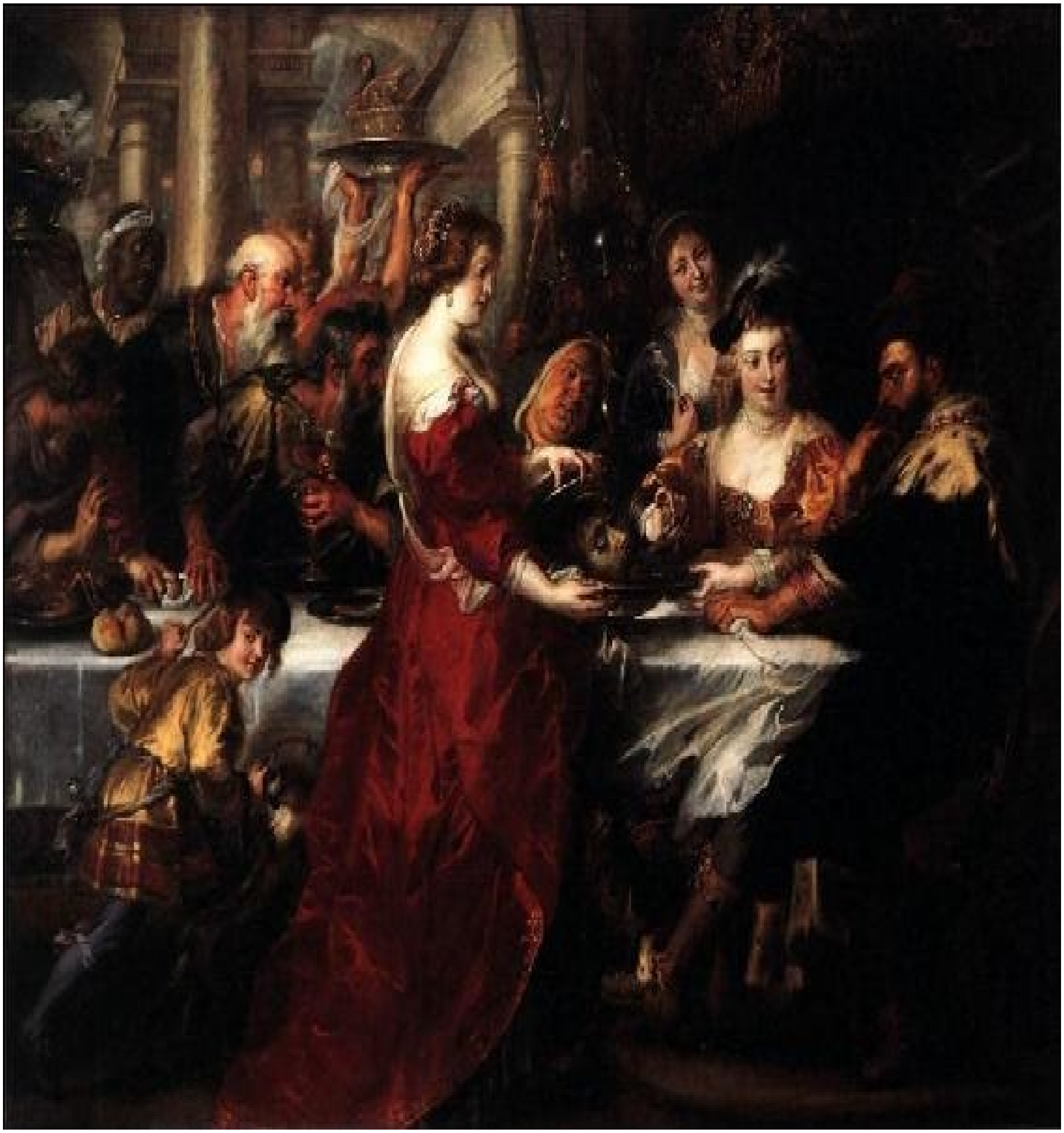
Mercury and a Sleeping Herdsman

c.1633
64 x 53 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA



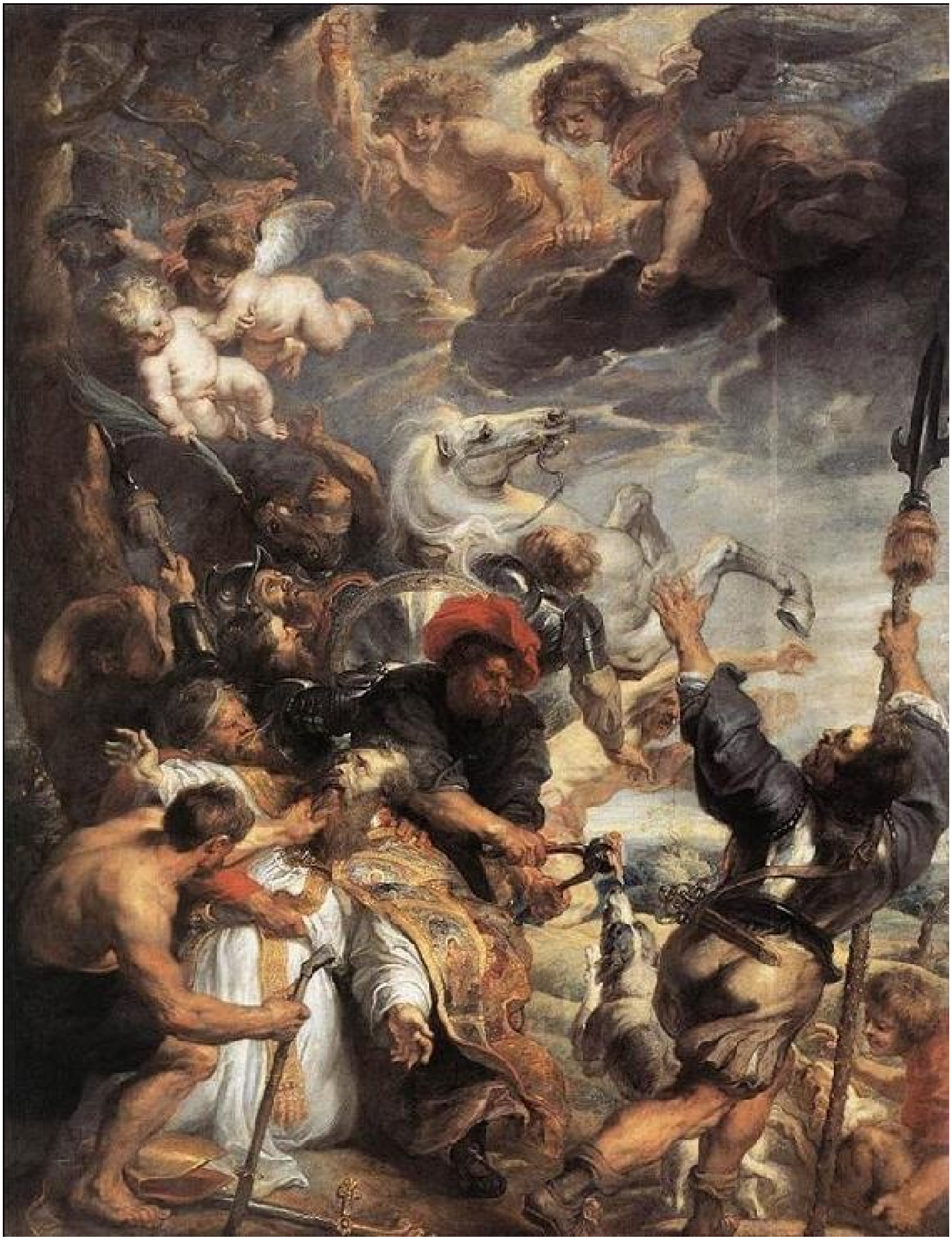
The Feast of Herod

1633
208 x 264 cm
National Galleries of Scotland



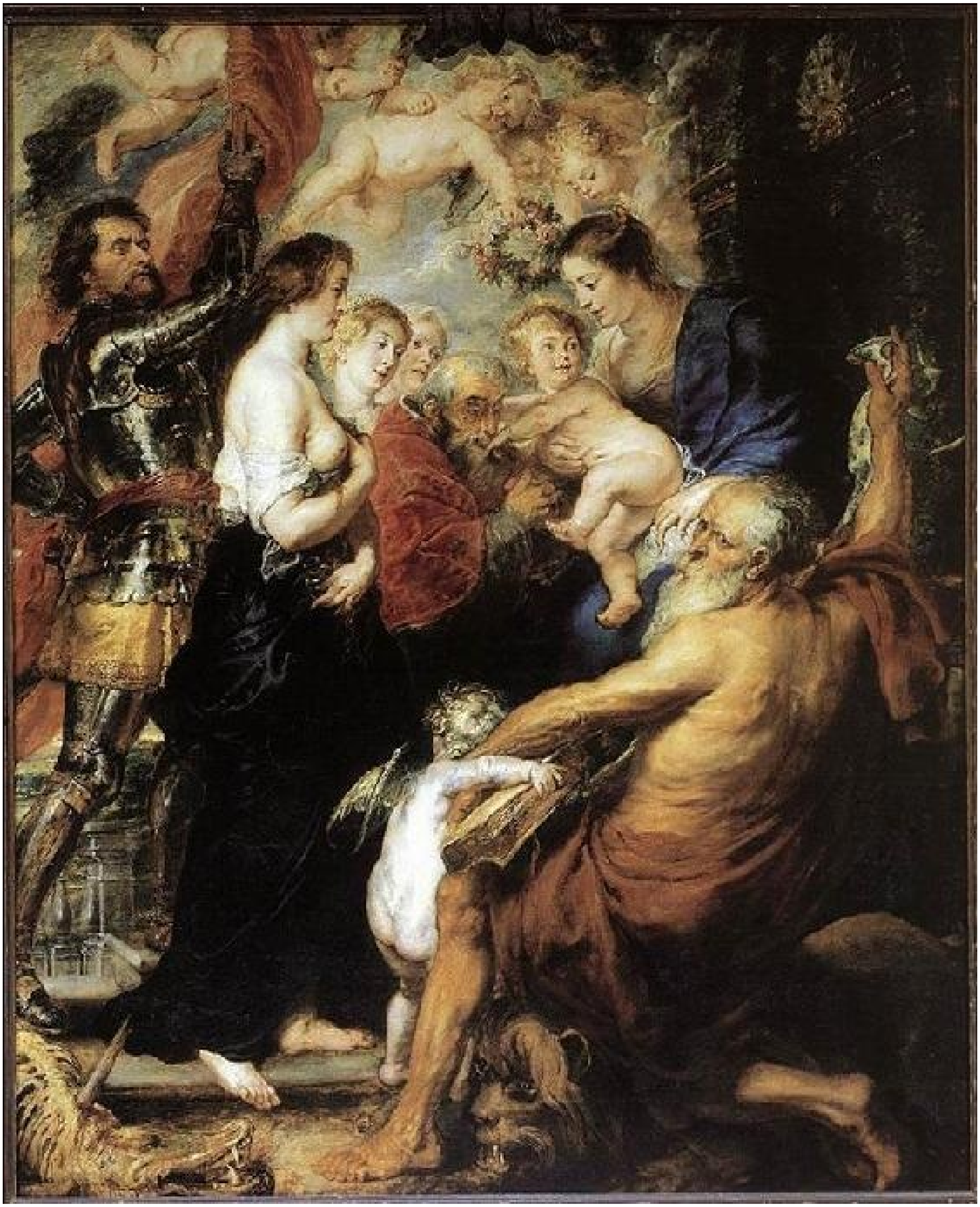
The Martyrdom of St. Livinus

1633
455 x 347 cm
Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium



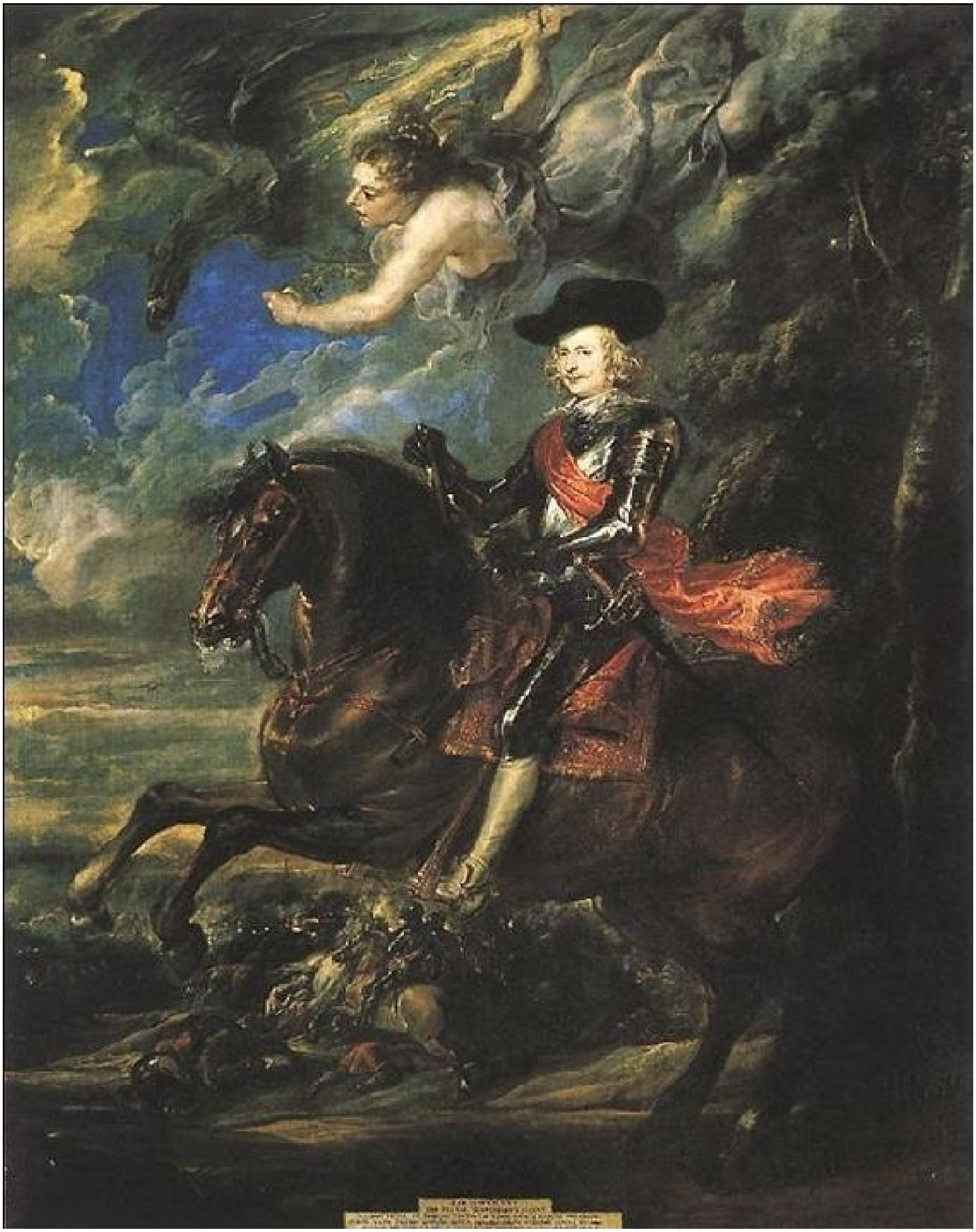
Our Lady with the Saints

1634



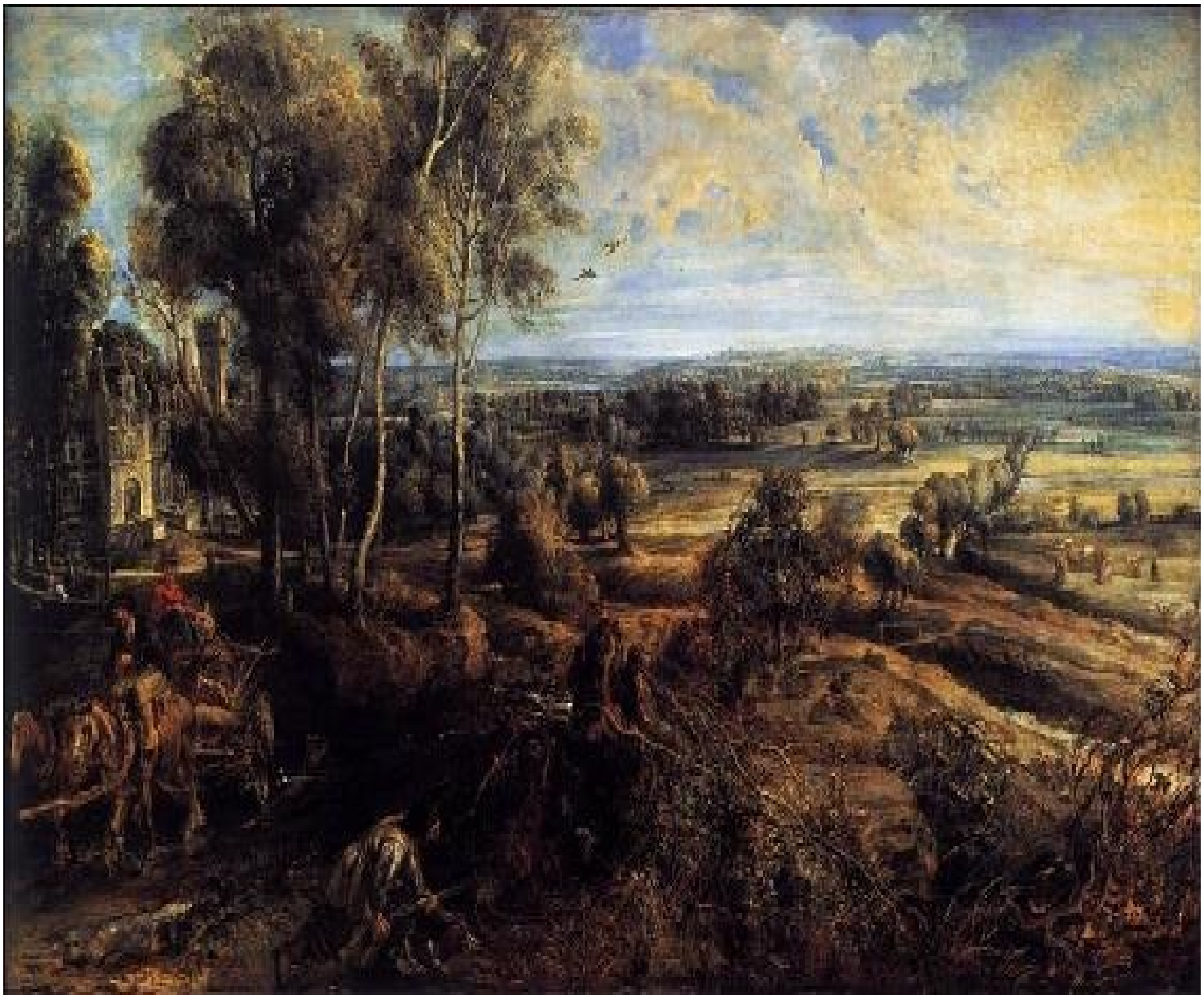
The Cardinal Infante

c.1634
335 x 258 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



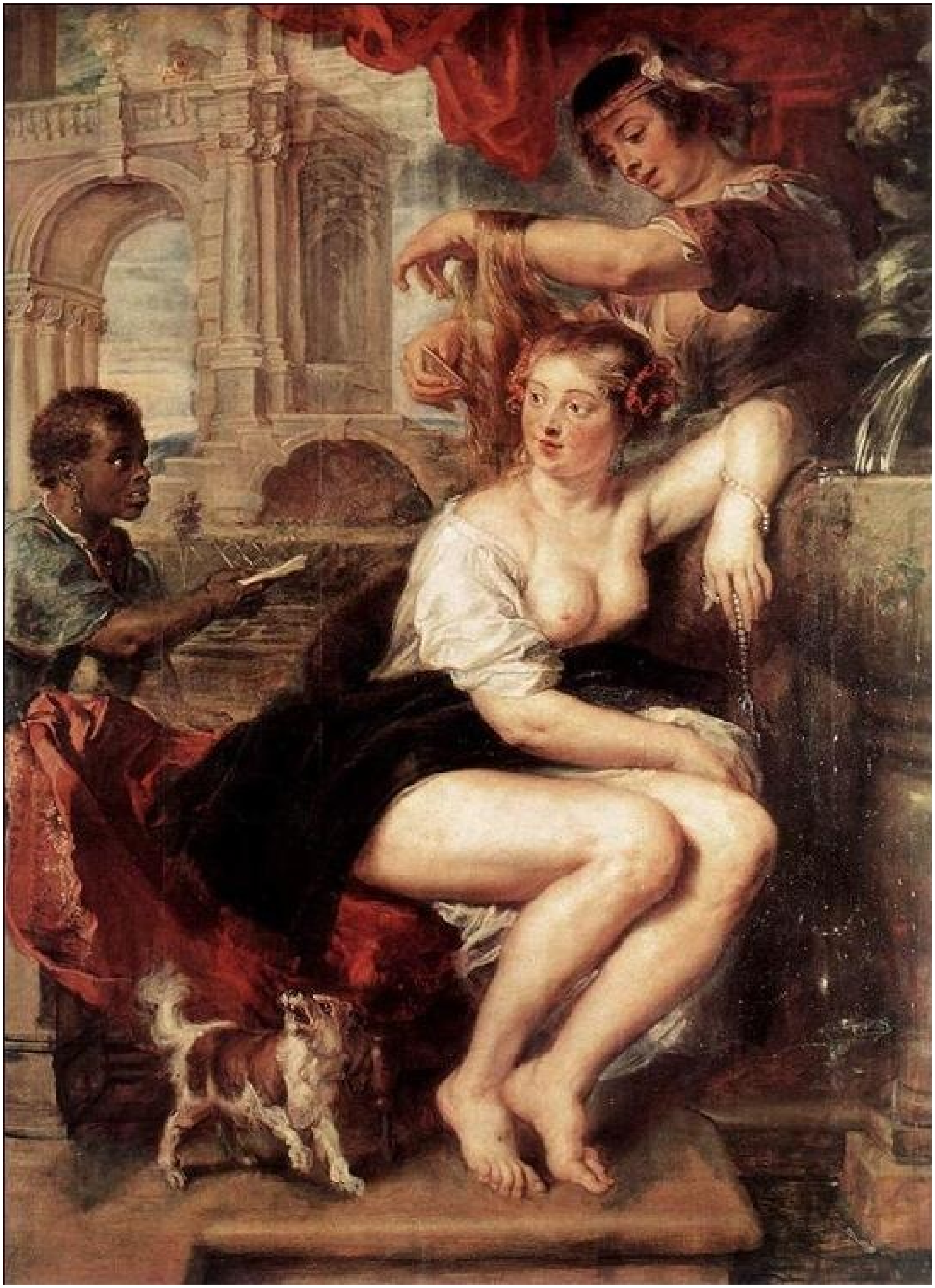
Autumn Landscape with a View of Het Steen

c.1635
137 x 235 cm
National Gallery, London



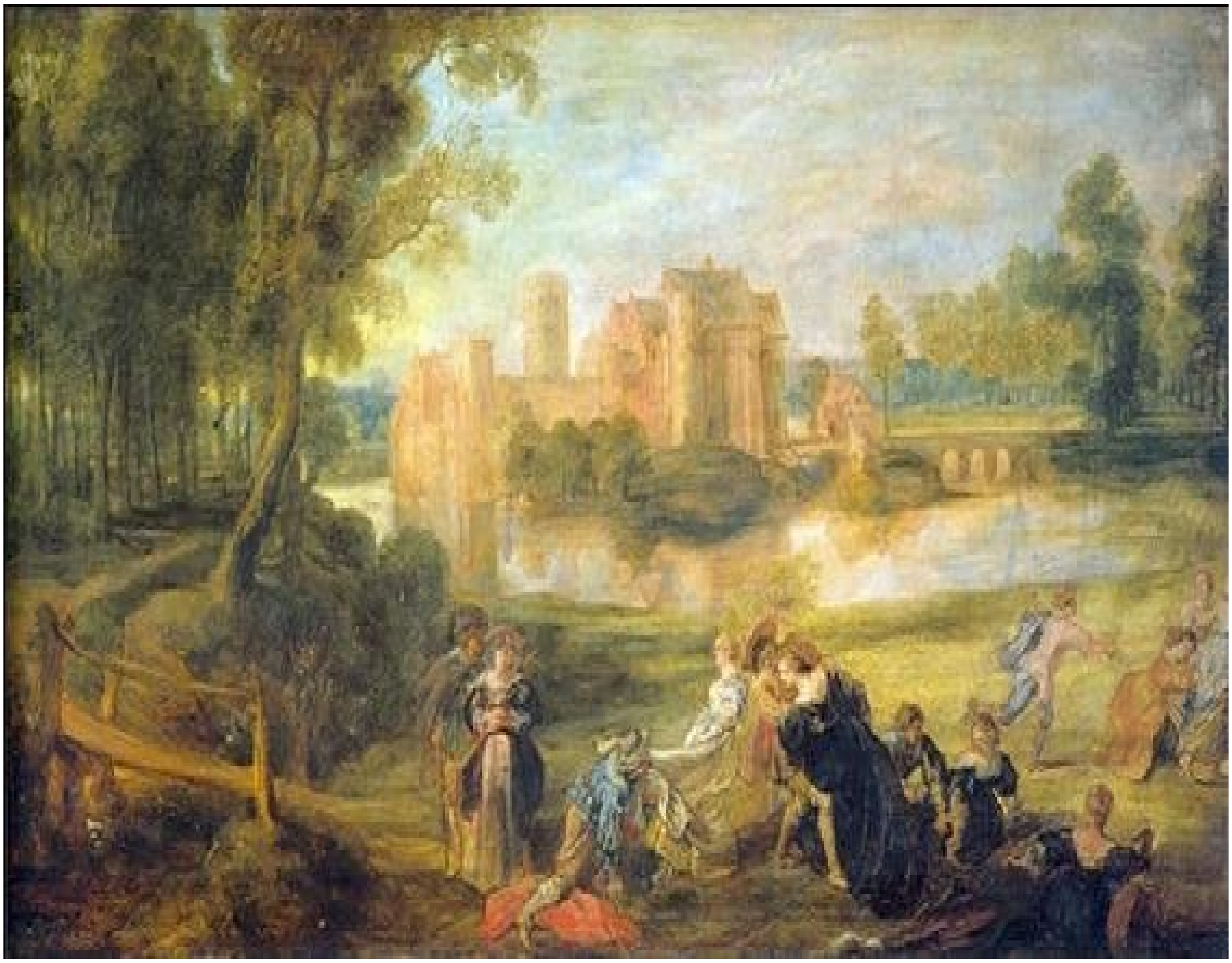
Bathsheba at the Fountain

c.1635
175 x 126 cm



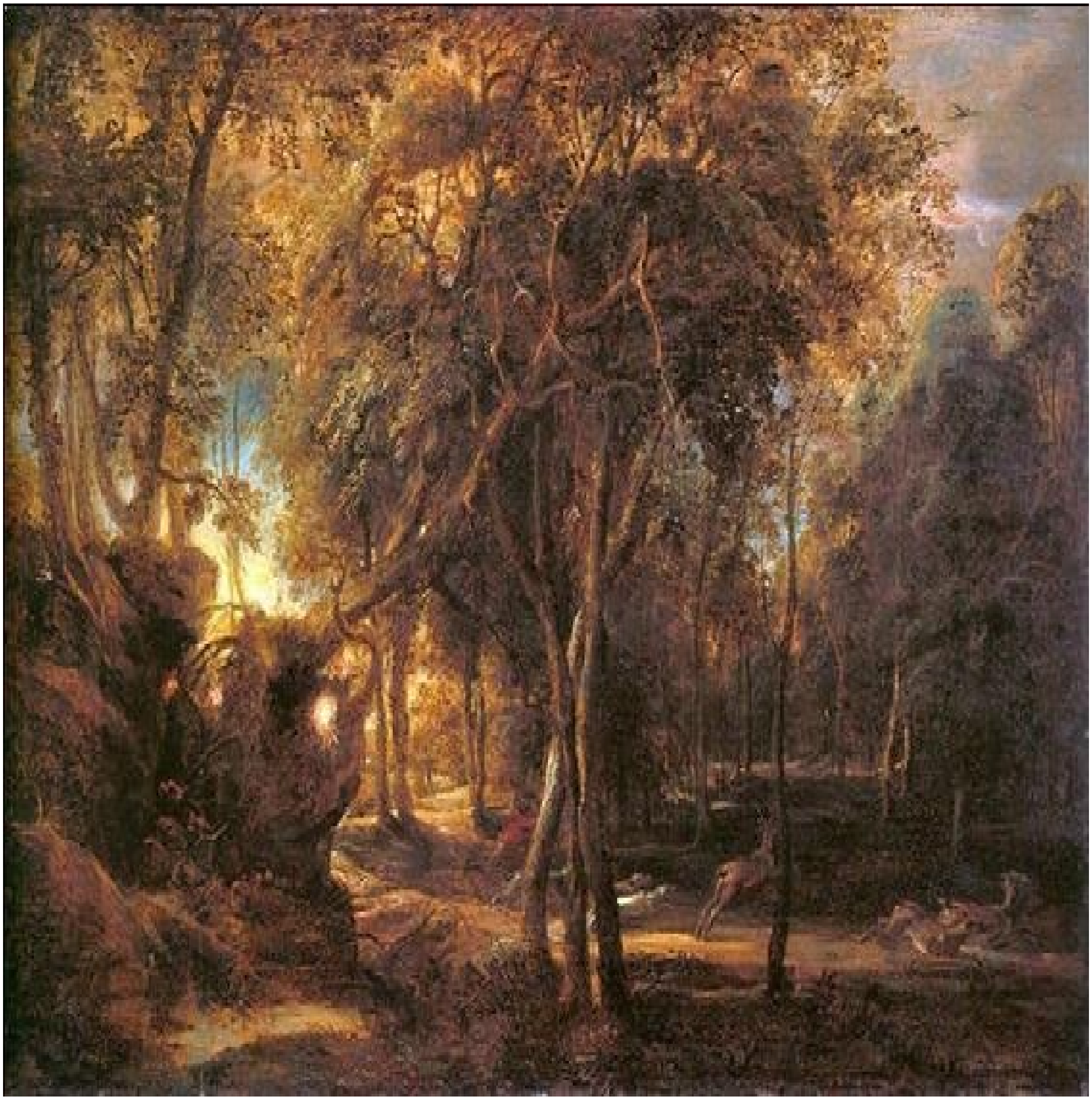
Castle Garden

c.1635
52 x 97 cm



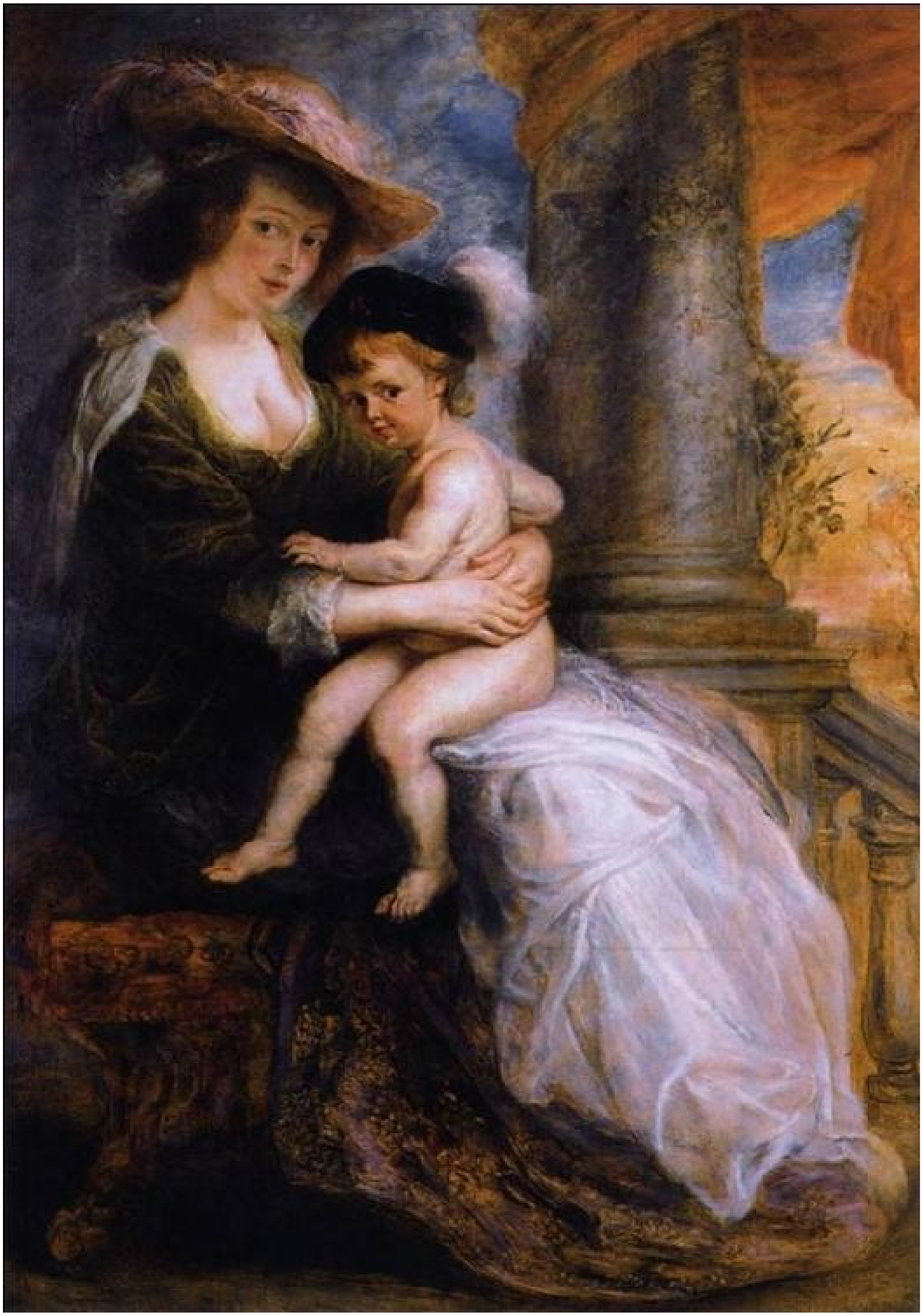
Forest Landscape at the Sunrise

c.1635
60 x 88 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City



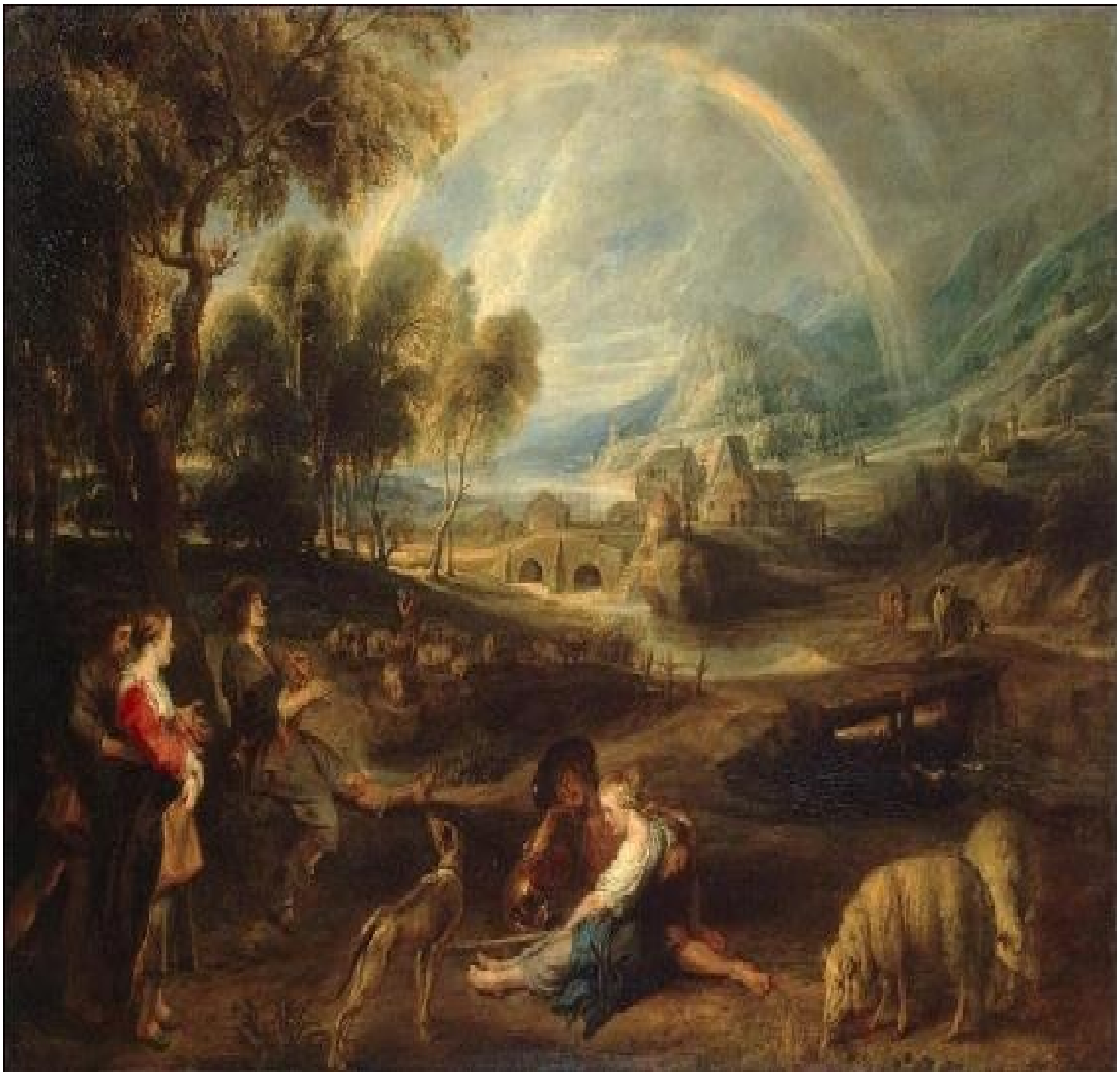
Helena Fourment with her Son Francis

1635
146 x 102 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



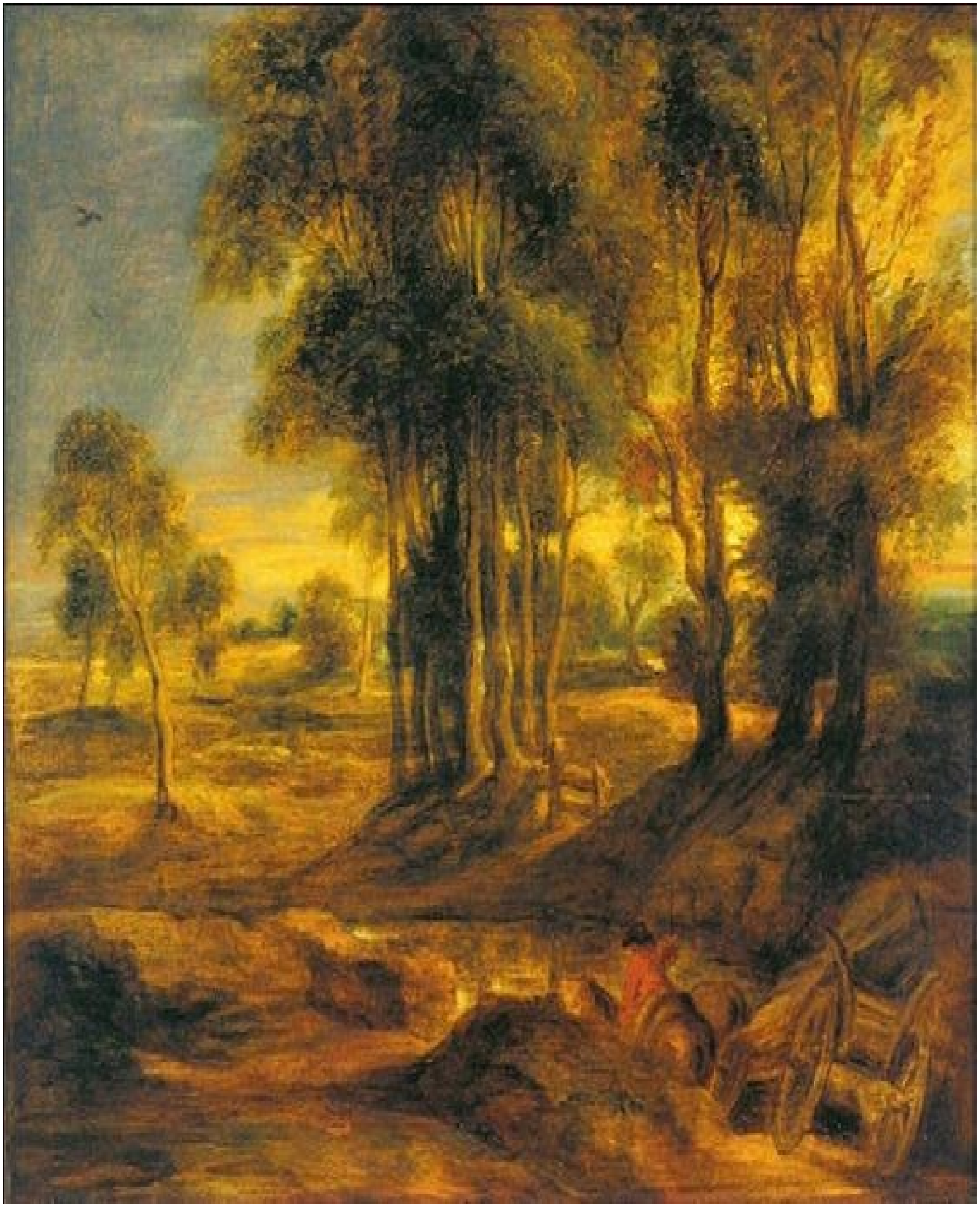
Landscape with a Rainbow

1635
86 x 130 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



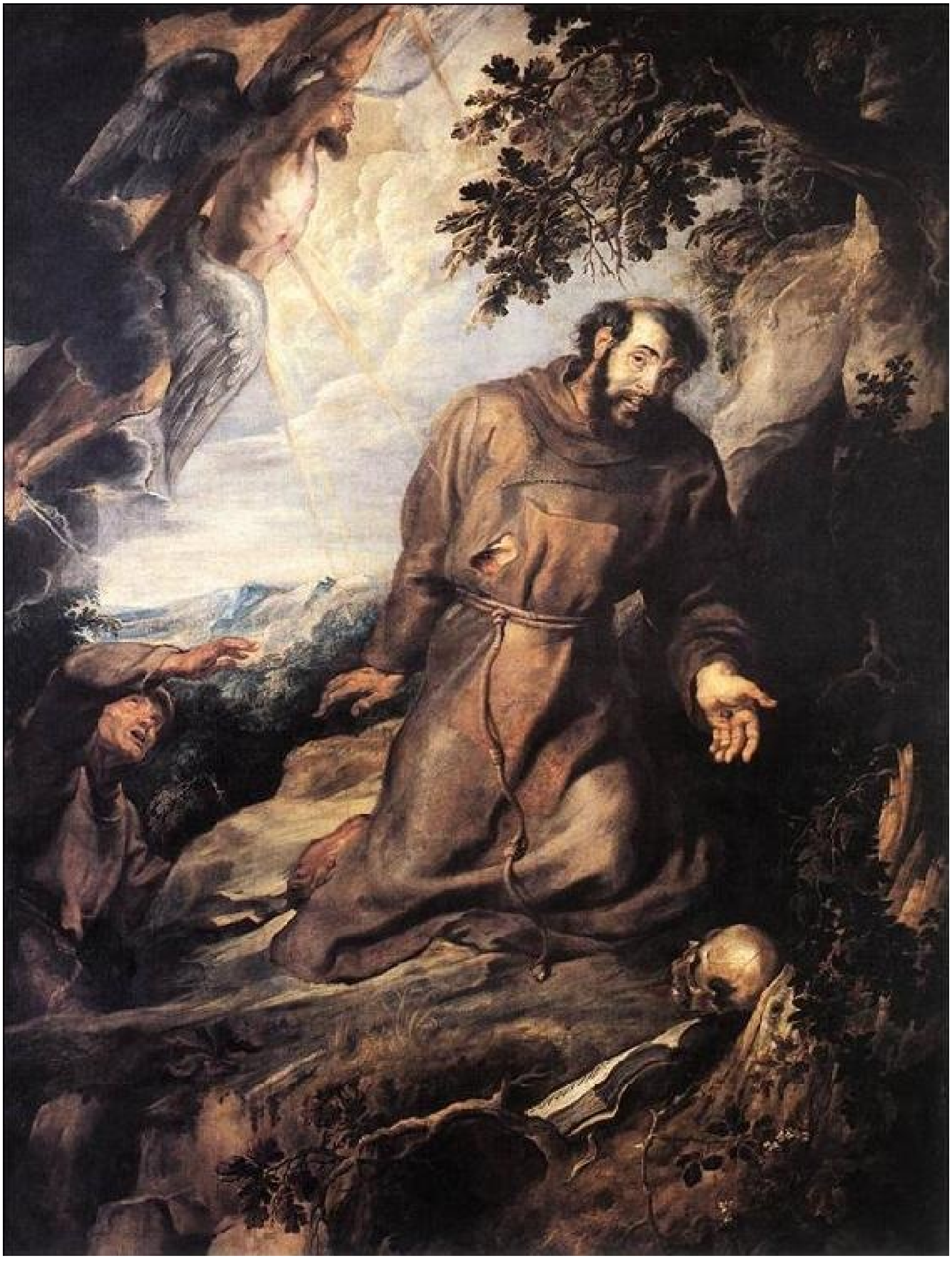
Landscape with the Carriage at the Sunset

1635



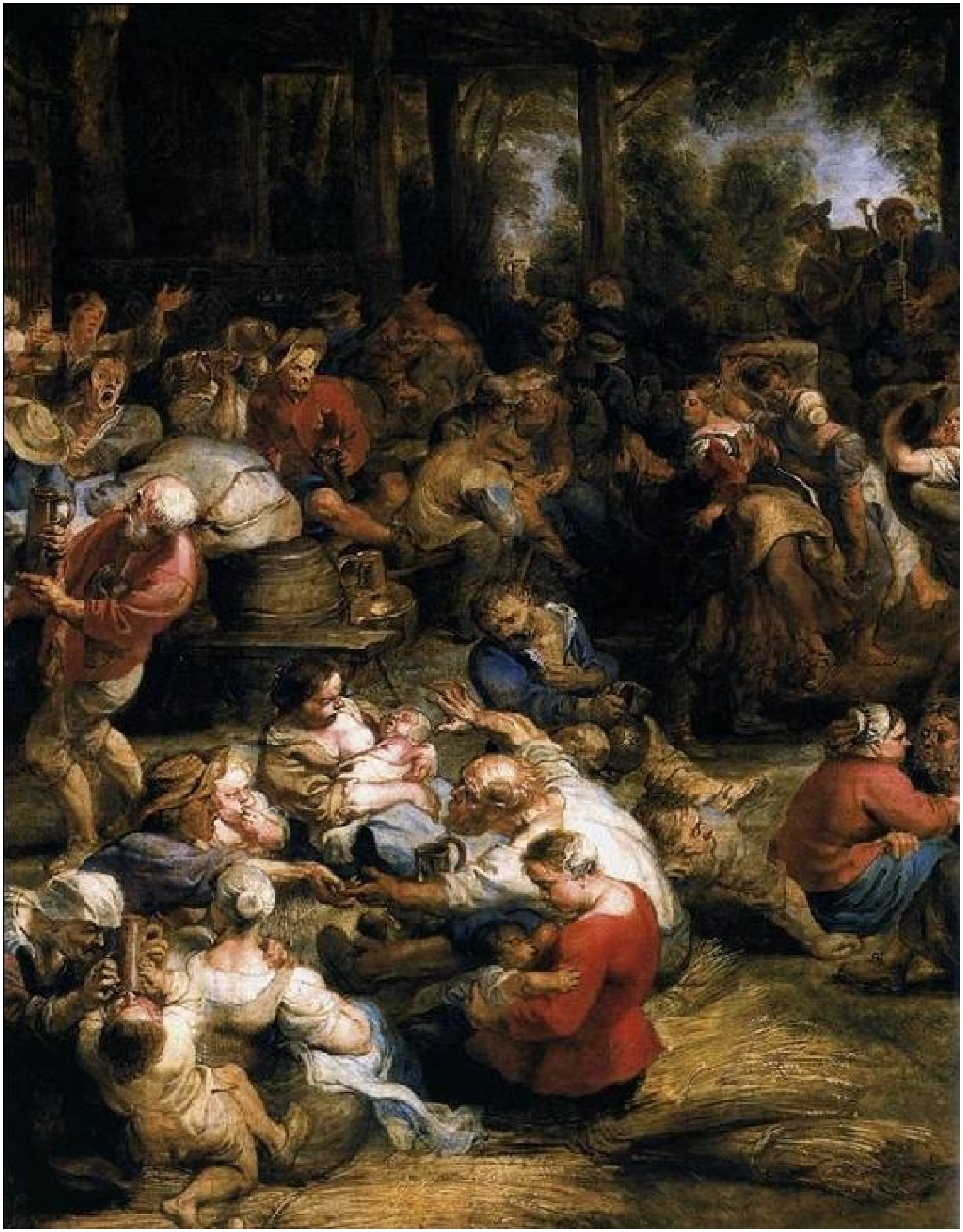
St. Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata

c.1635
364 x 195 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten



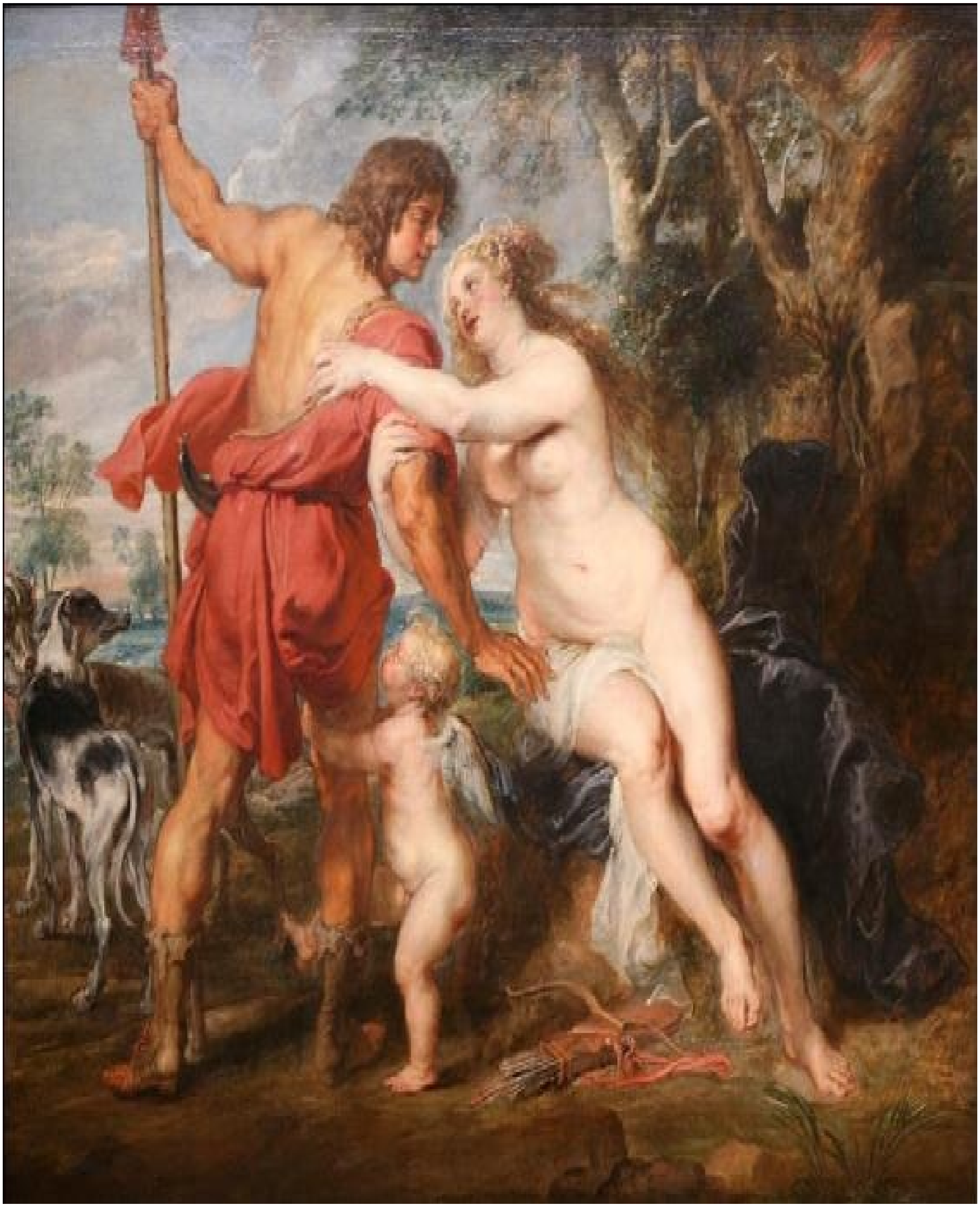
The Village Fête (Flemish Kermis)

1635-38
Oil on wood, 149 x 261 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris



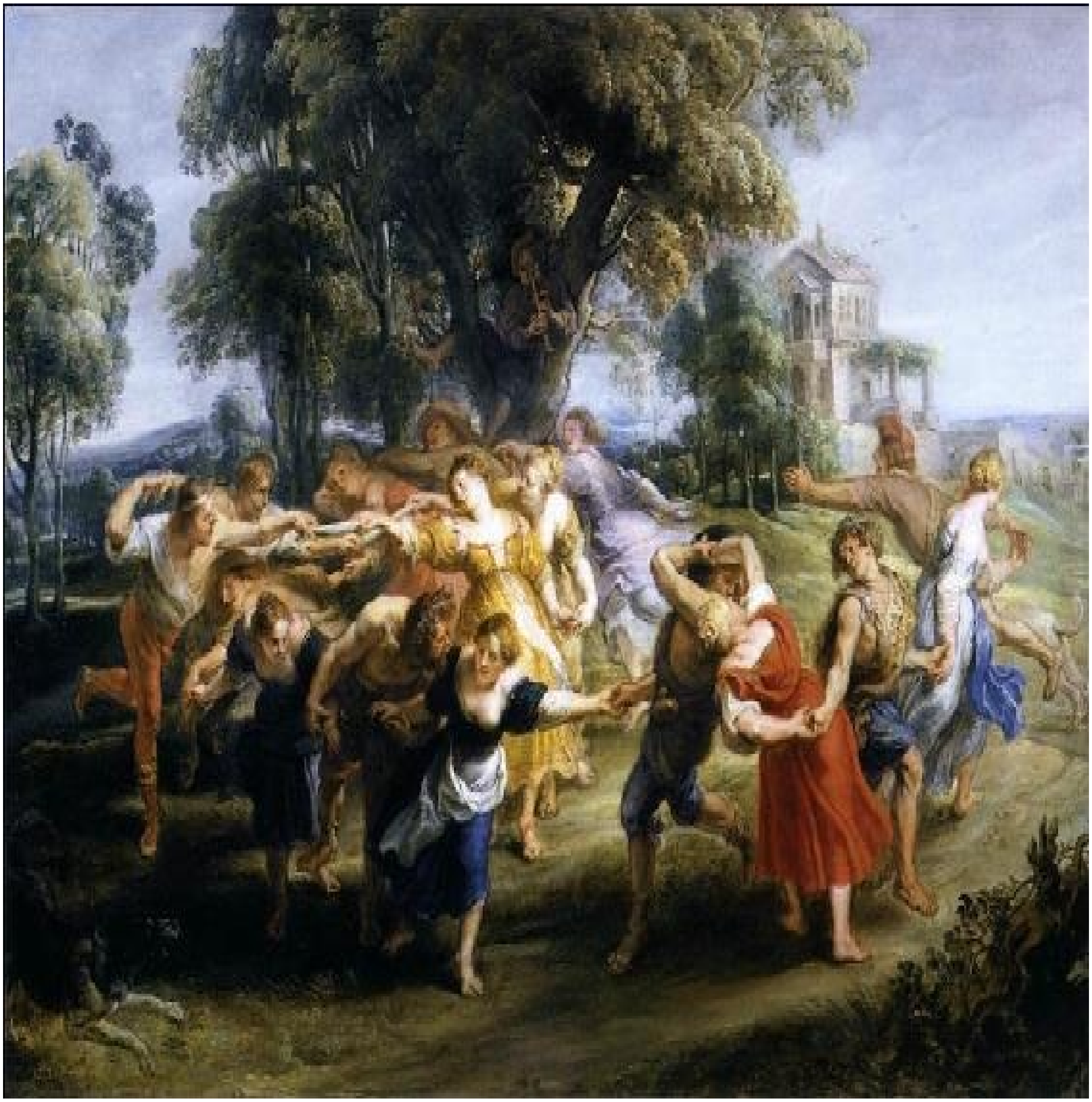
Venus und Adonis

c.1635
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City



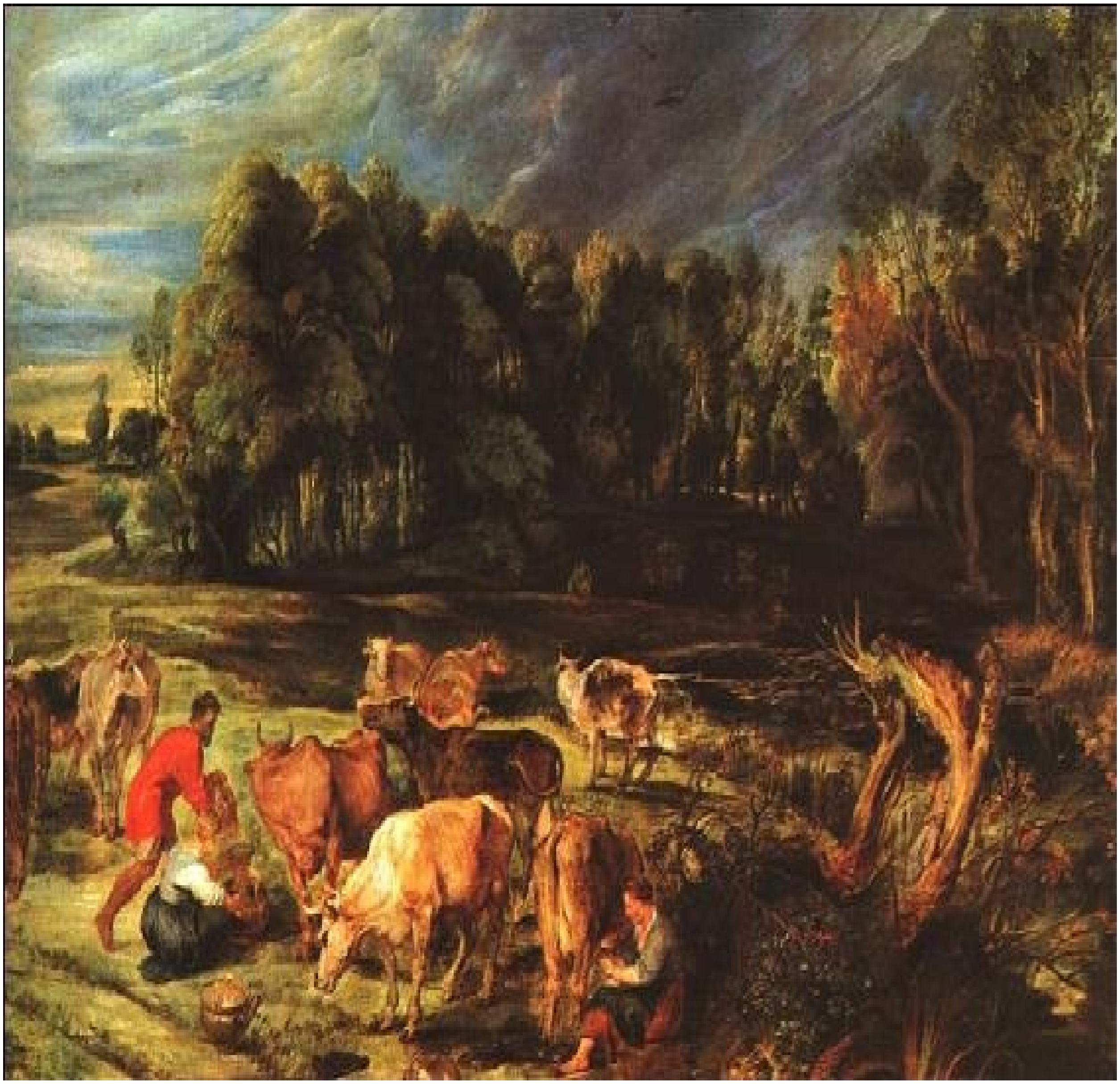
Dance of Italian Villagers

c.1636
73 x 106 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



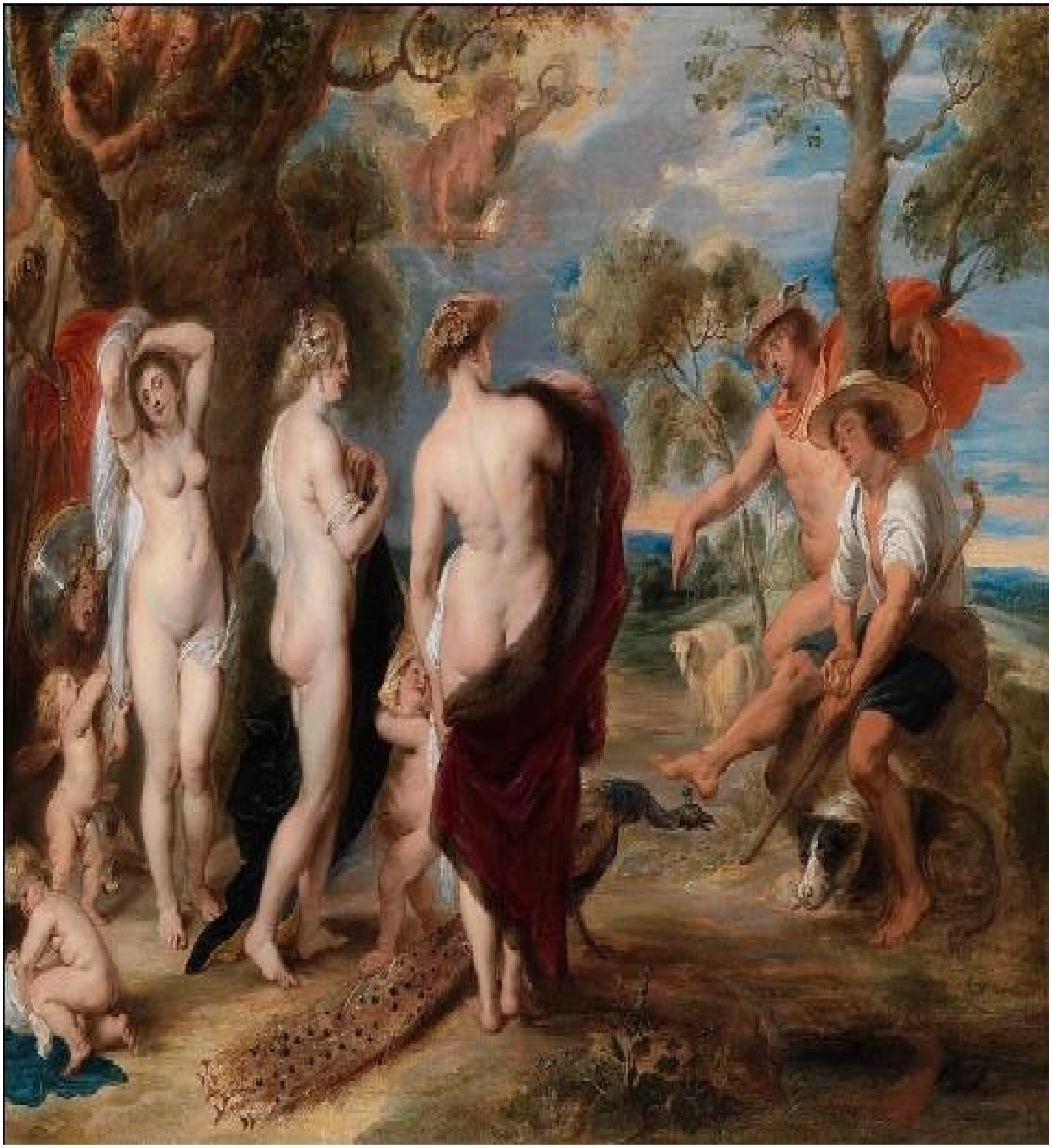
Landscape with Cows

c.1636
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



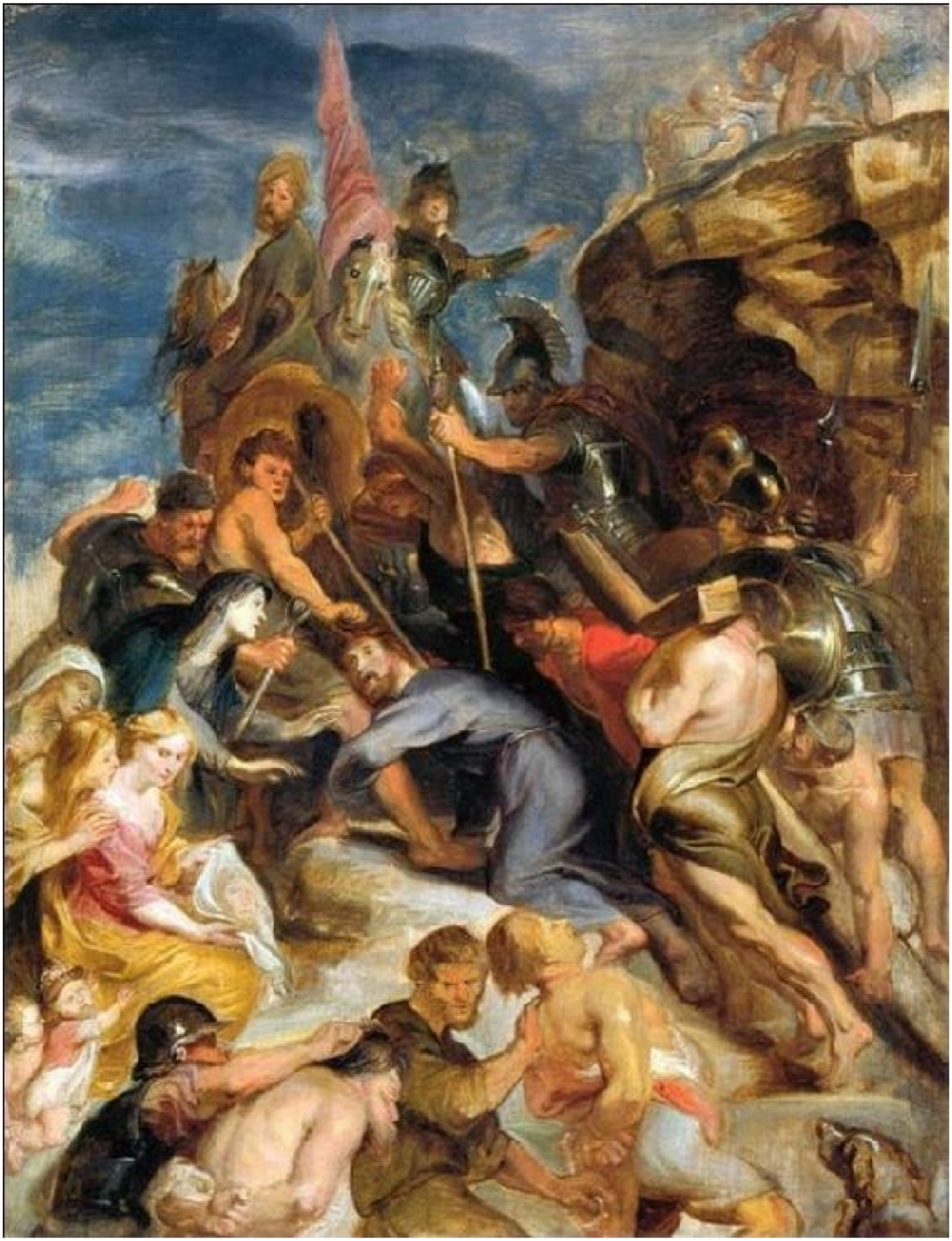
The Judgment of Paris

c.1636
145 x 194 cm
National Gallery, London



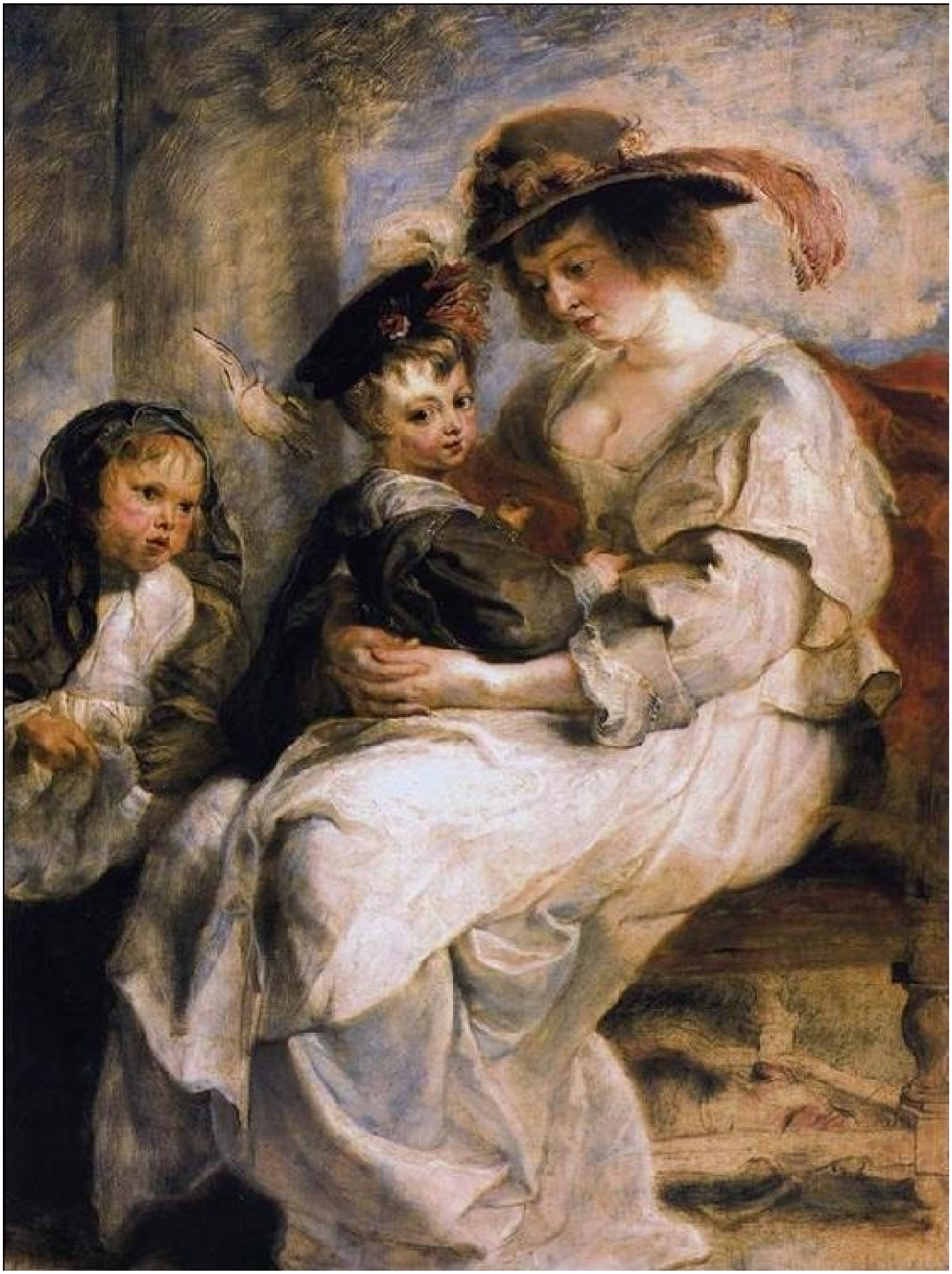
Carrying the Cross

1637
64 x 50 cm



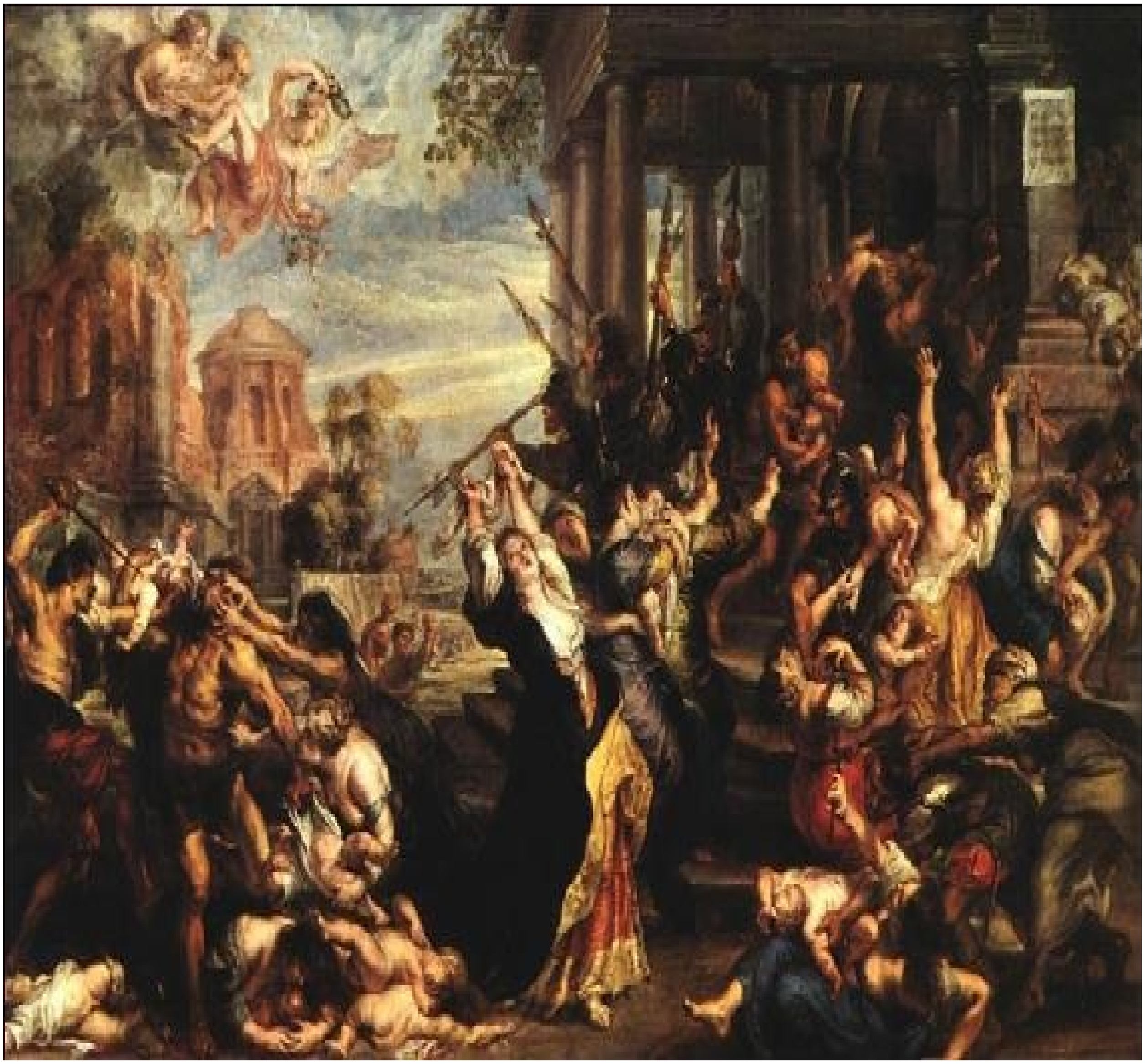
Helene Fourment with her Children

1637
115 x 85 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



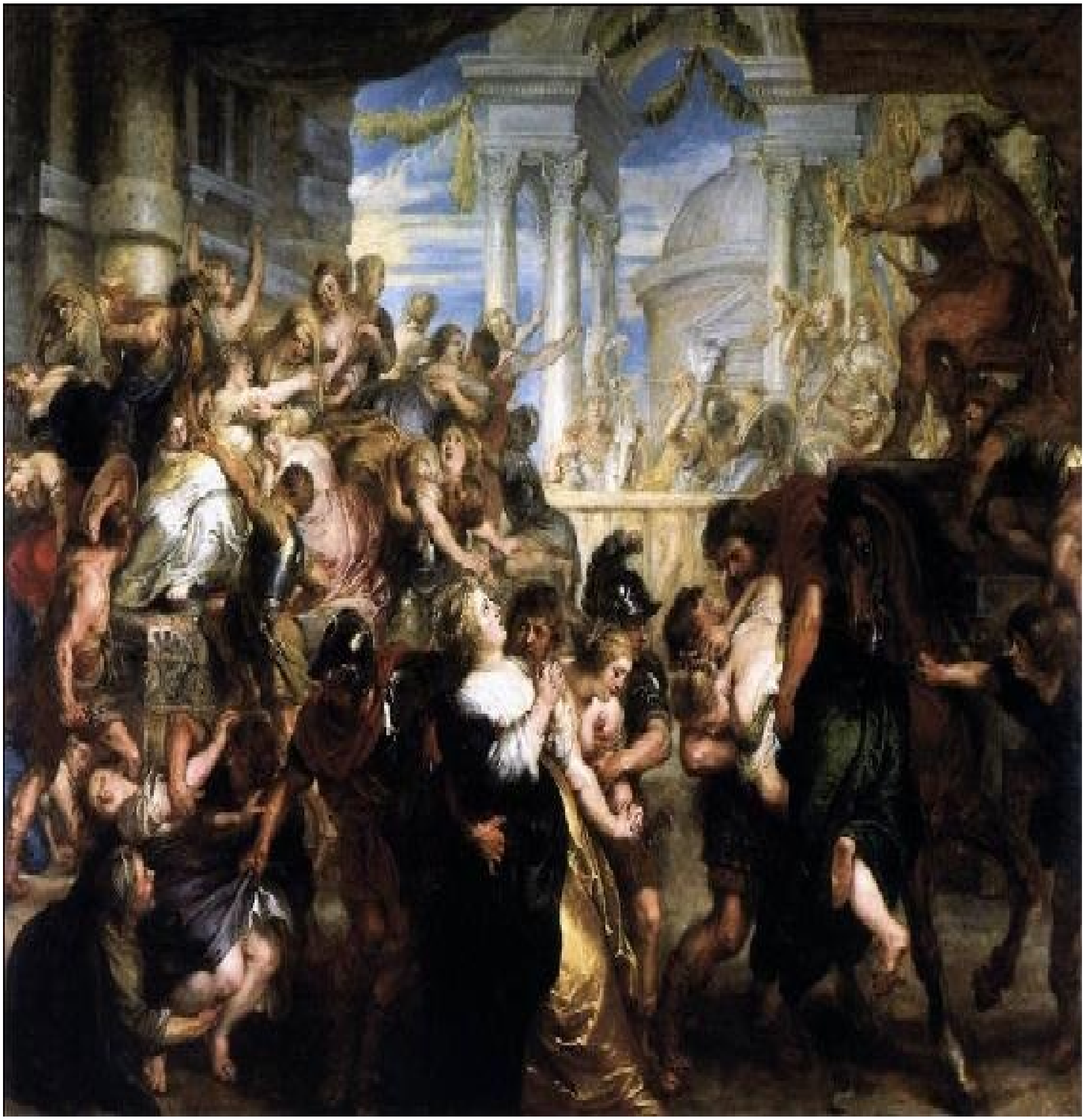
Massacre of the Innocents

1637
199 x 302 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



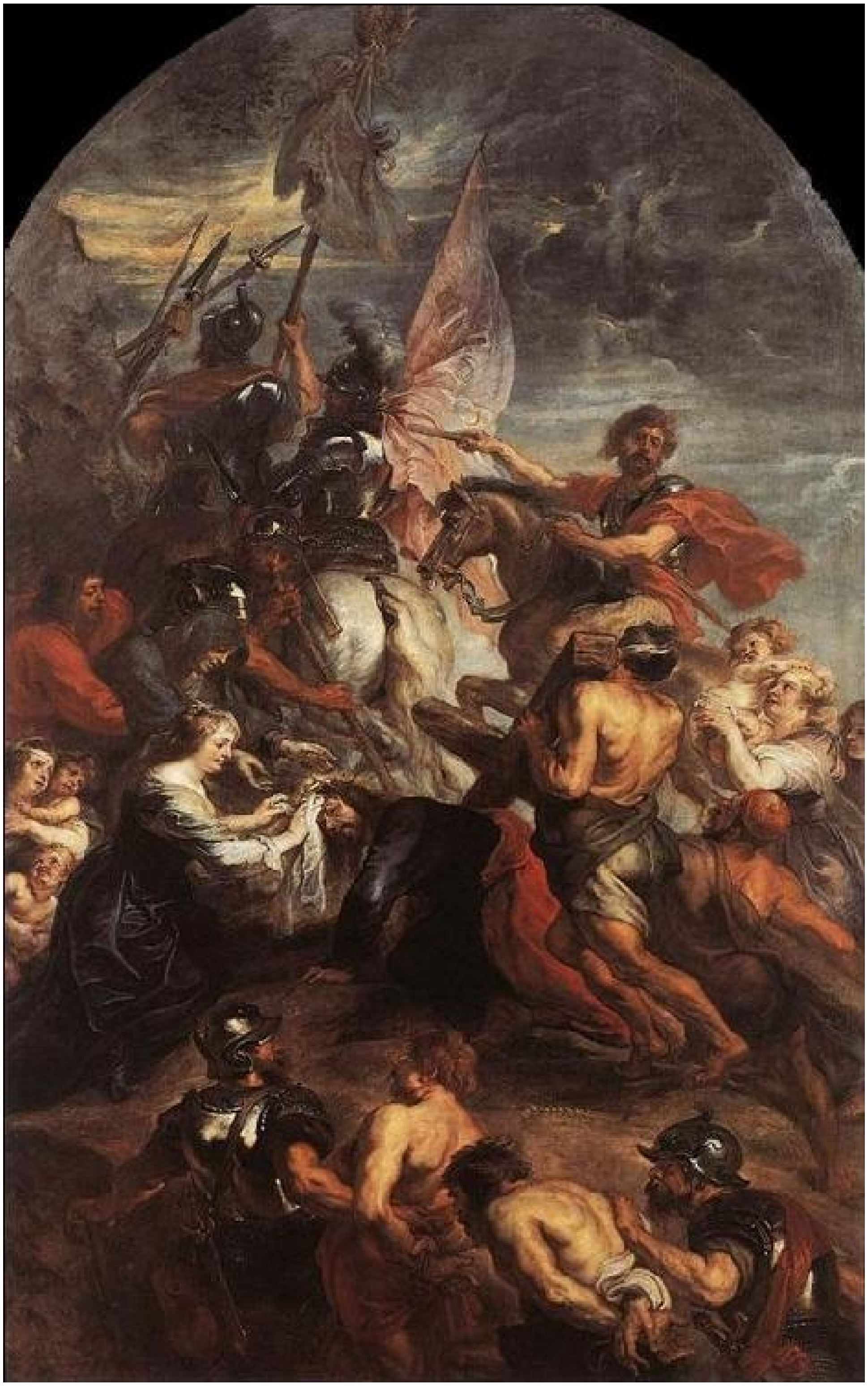
The Rape of the Sabine Women

c.1637
170 x 236 cm
National Gallery, London



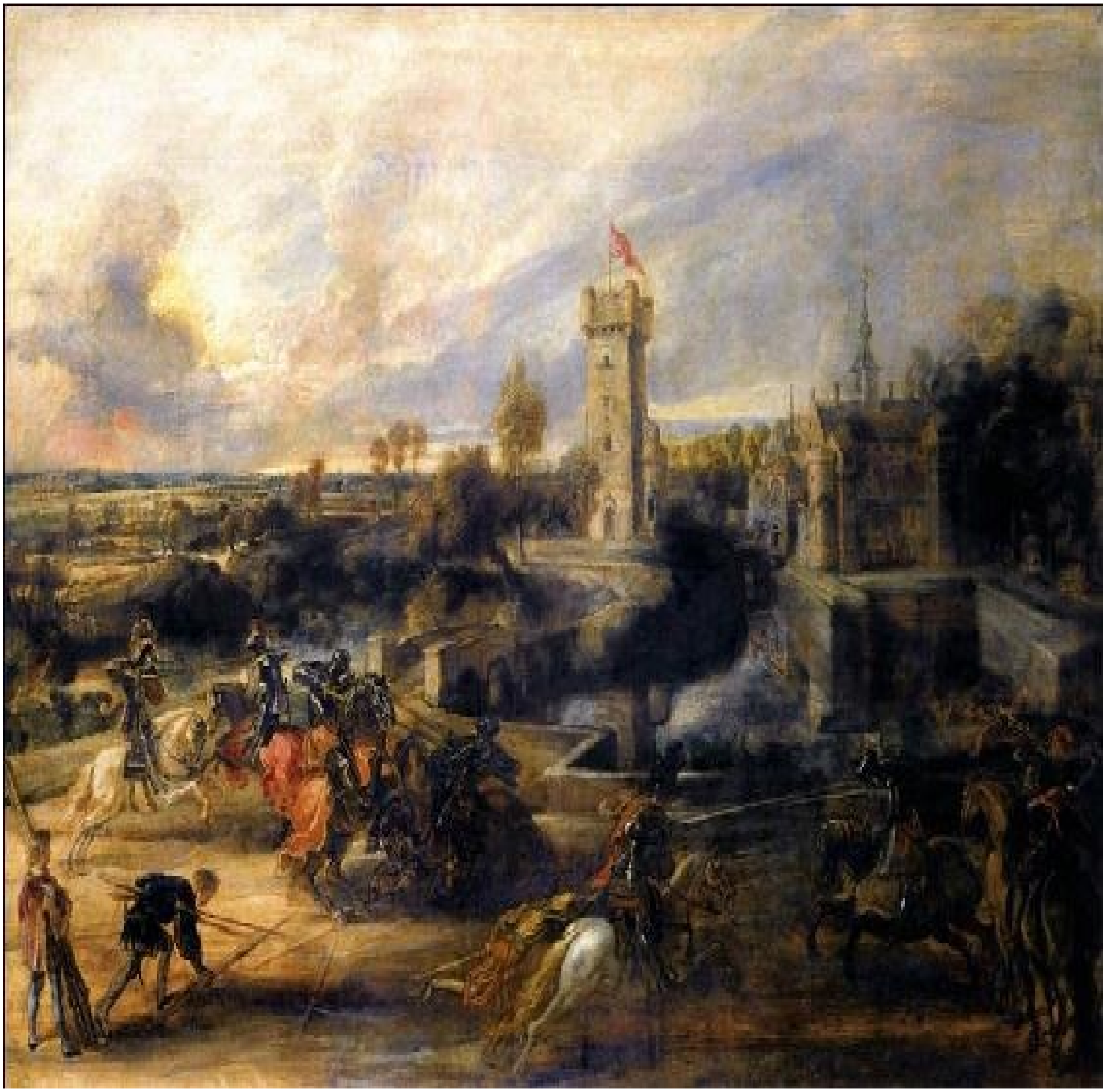
The Road to Calvary

1637
569 x 355 cm
Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium



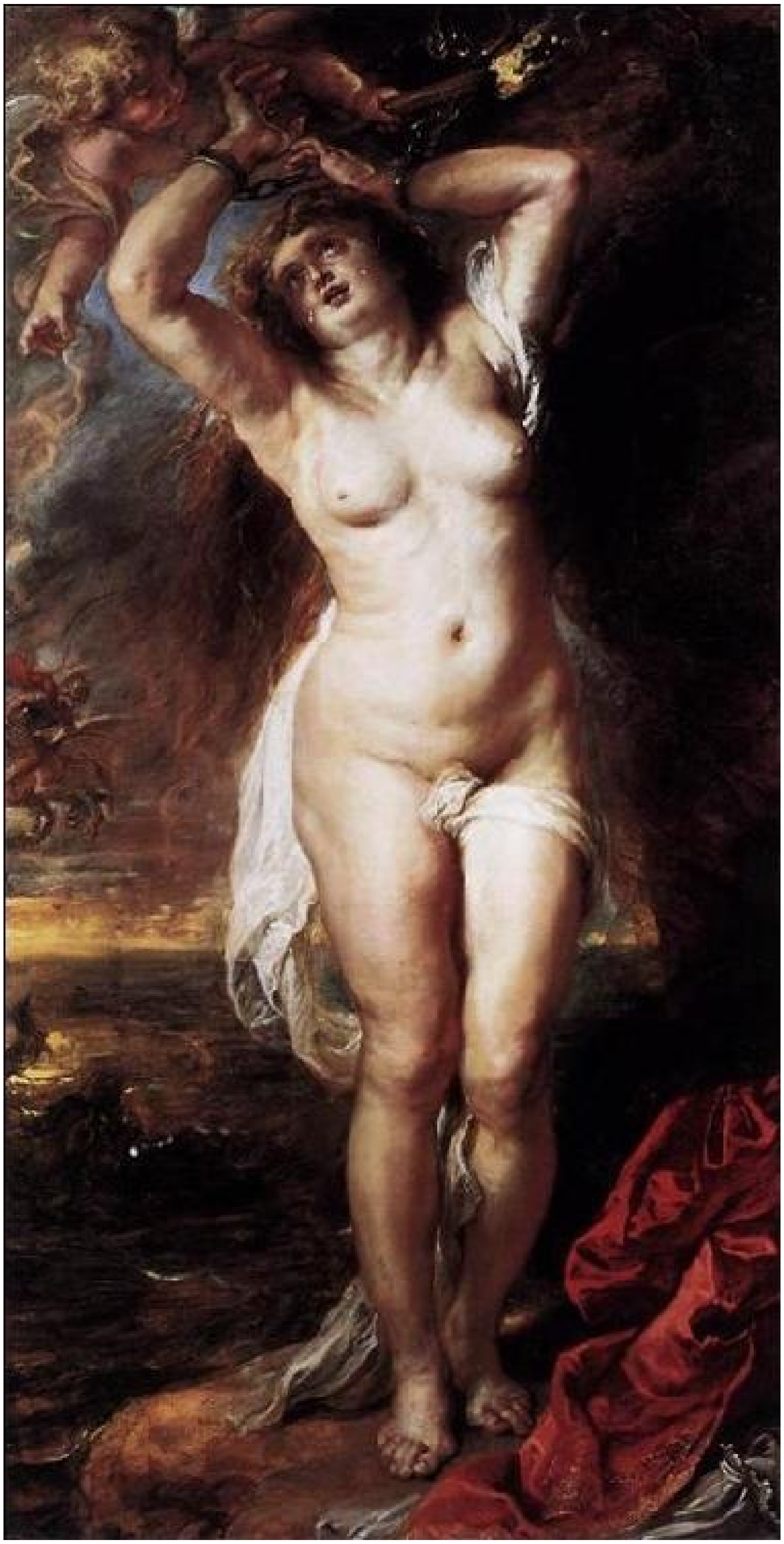
Tournament in front of Castle Steen

1637
72 x 106 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



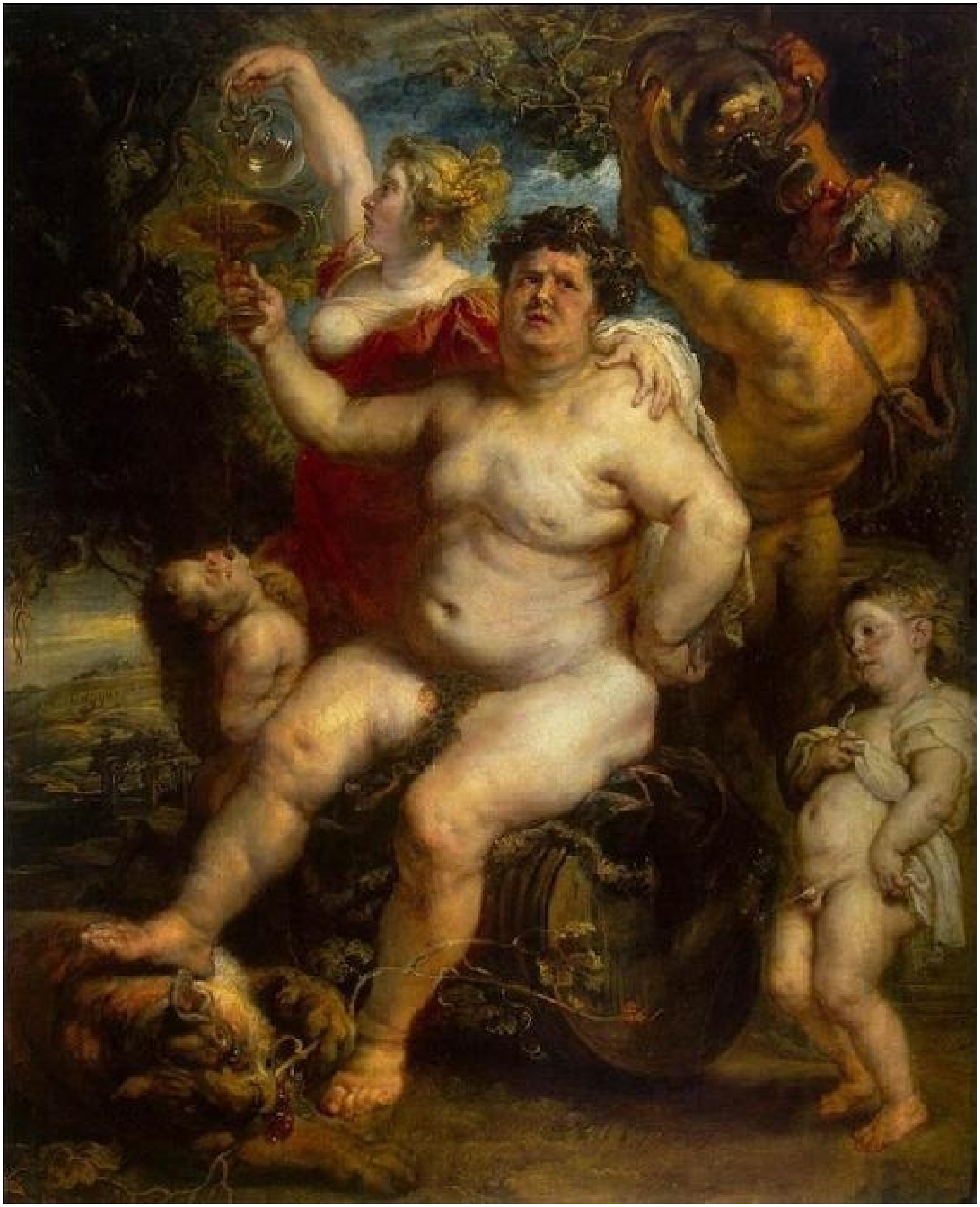
Andromeda

c.1638
189 x 94 cm



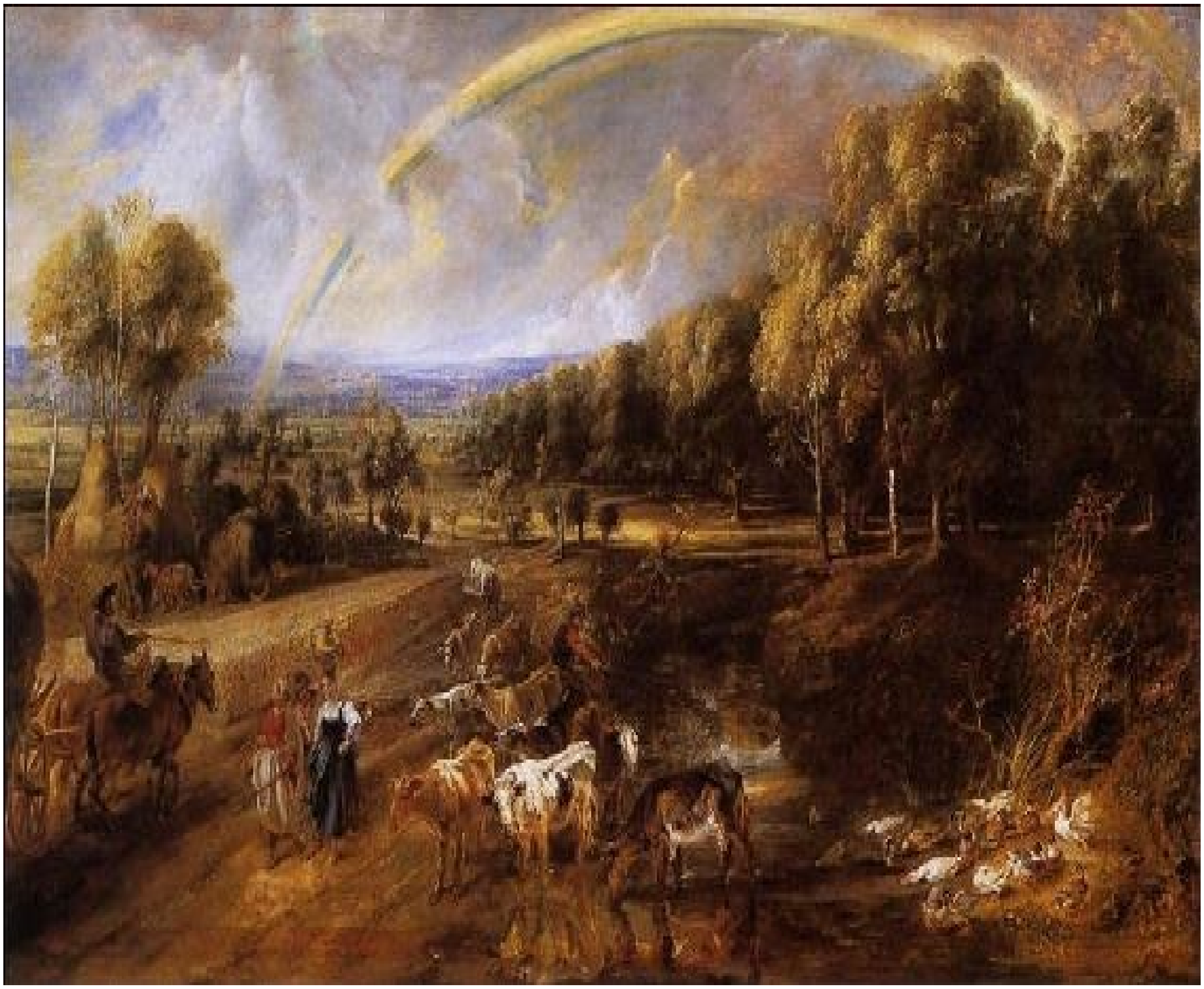
Bacchus

1638-40
Oil on canvas, transferred from panel, 191 x 161 cm
The Hermitage, St. Petersburg



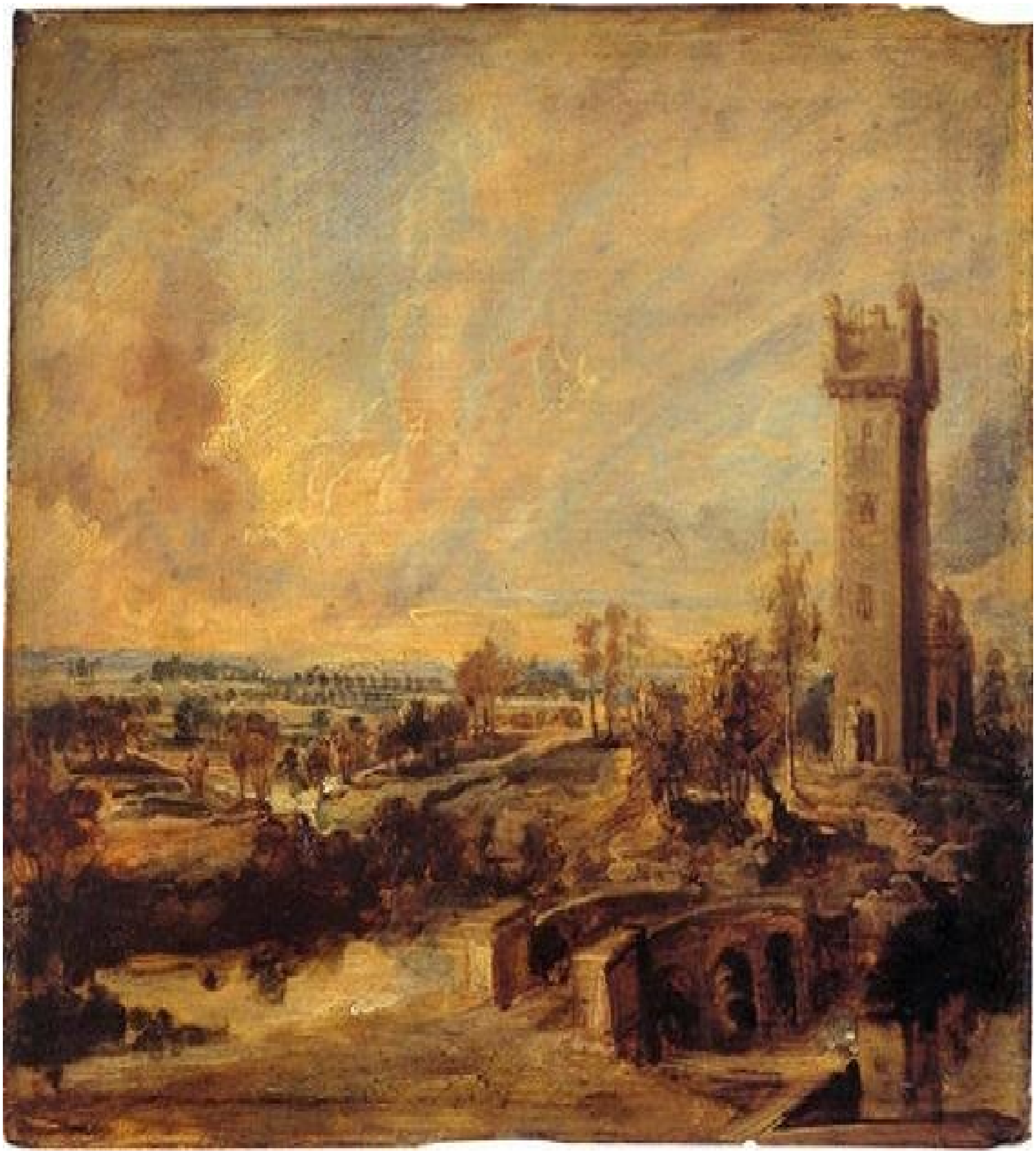
Landscape with a Rainbow

c.1638
136 x 236 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



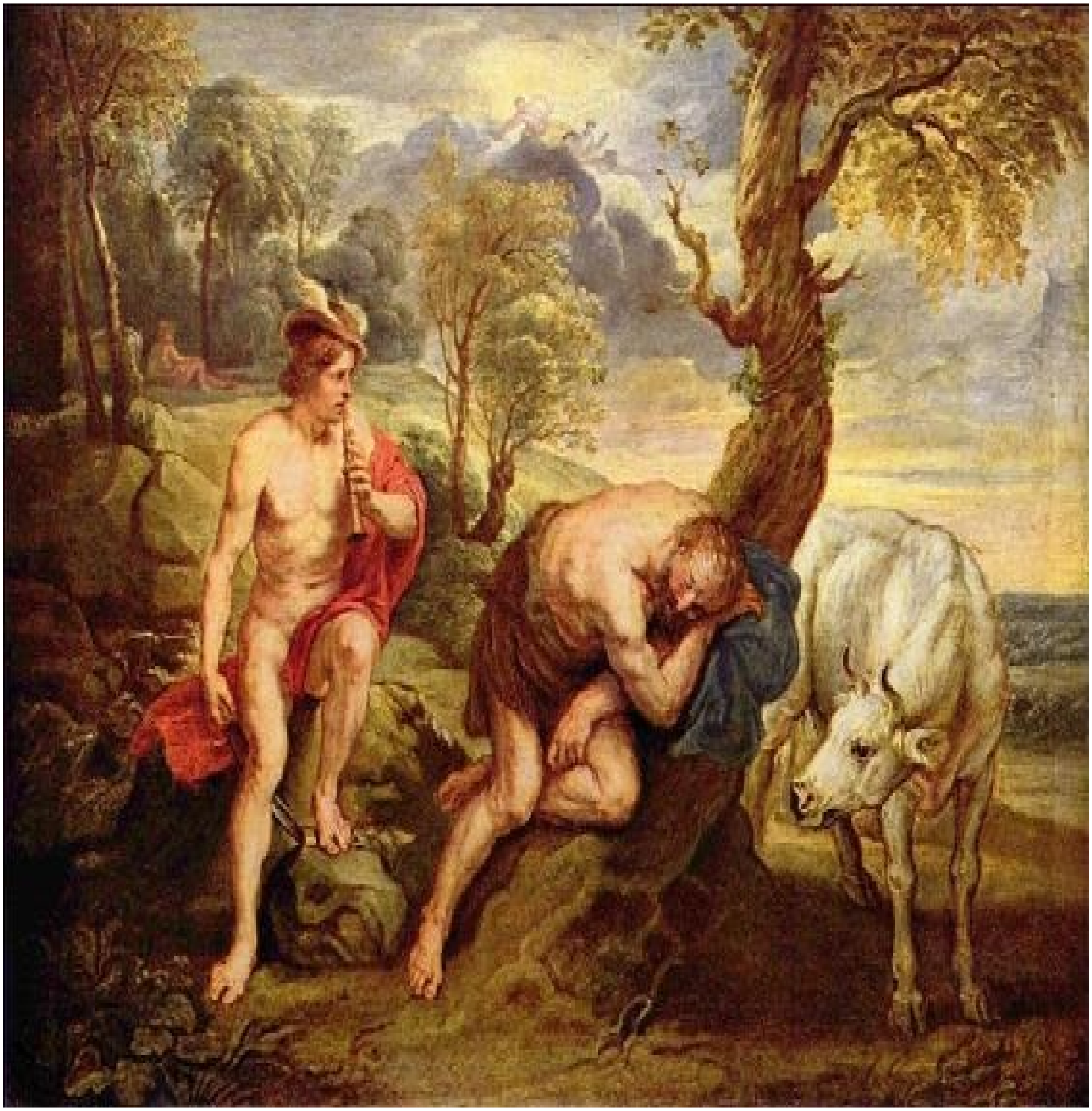
Landscape with Tower

c.1638
23 x 30 cm



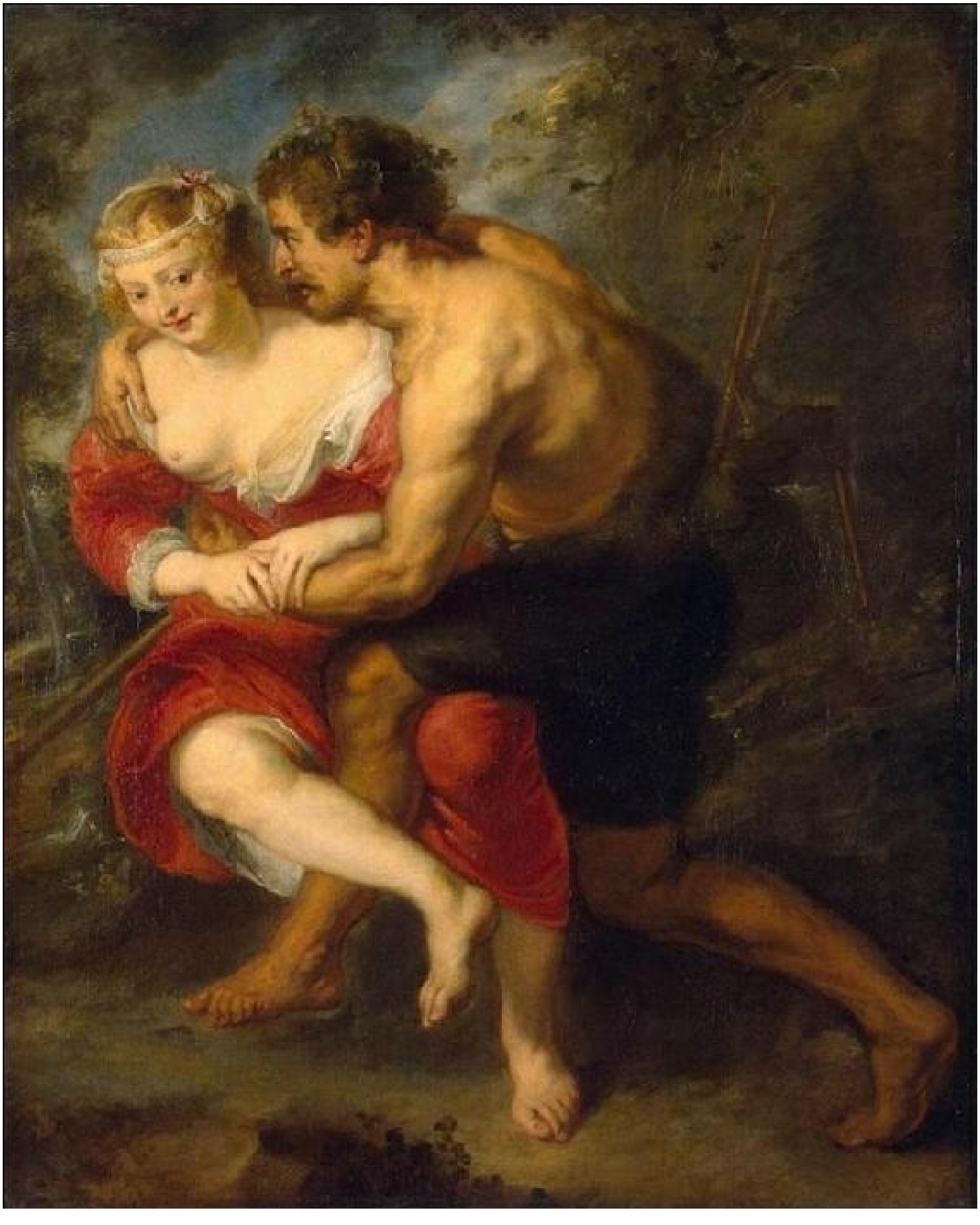
Mercury and Argus

1638
63 x 87.5 cm



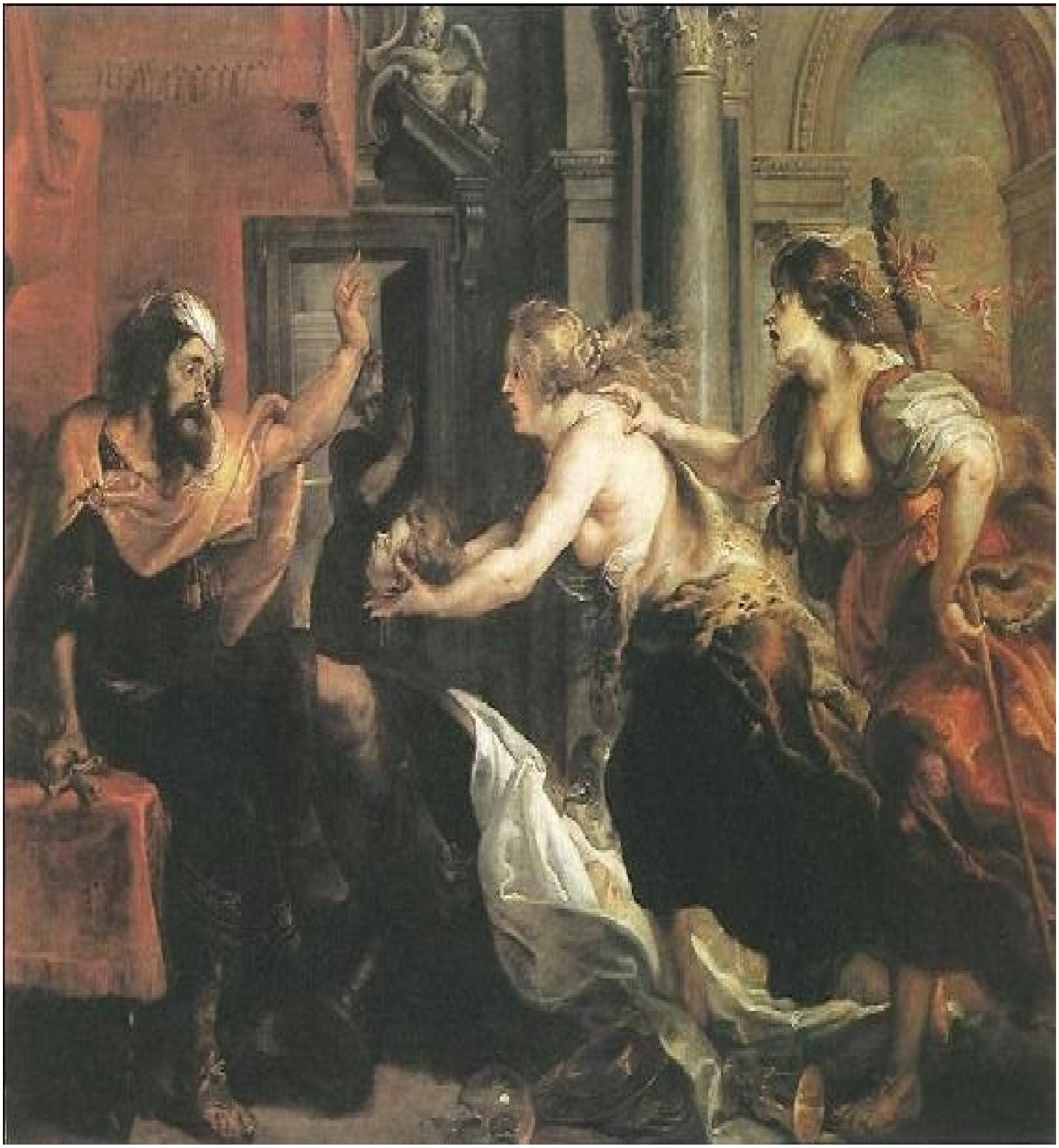
Pastoral Scene

1638
114 x 91 cm
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



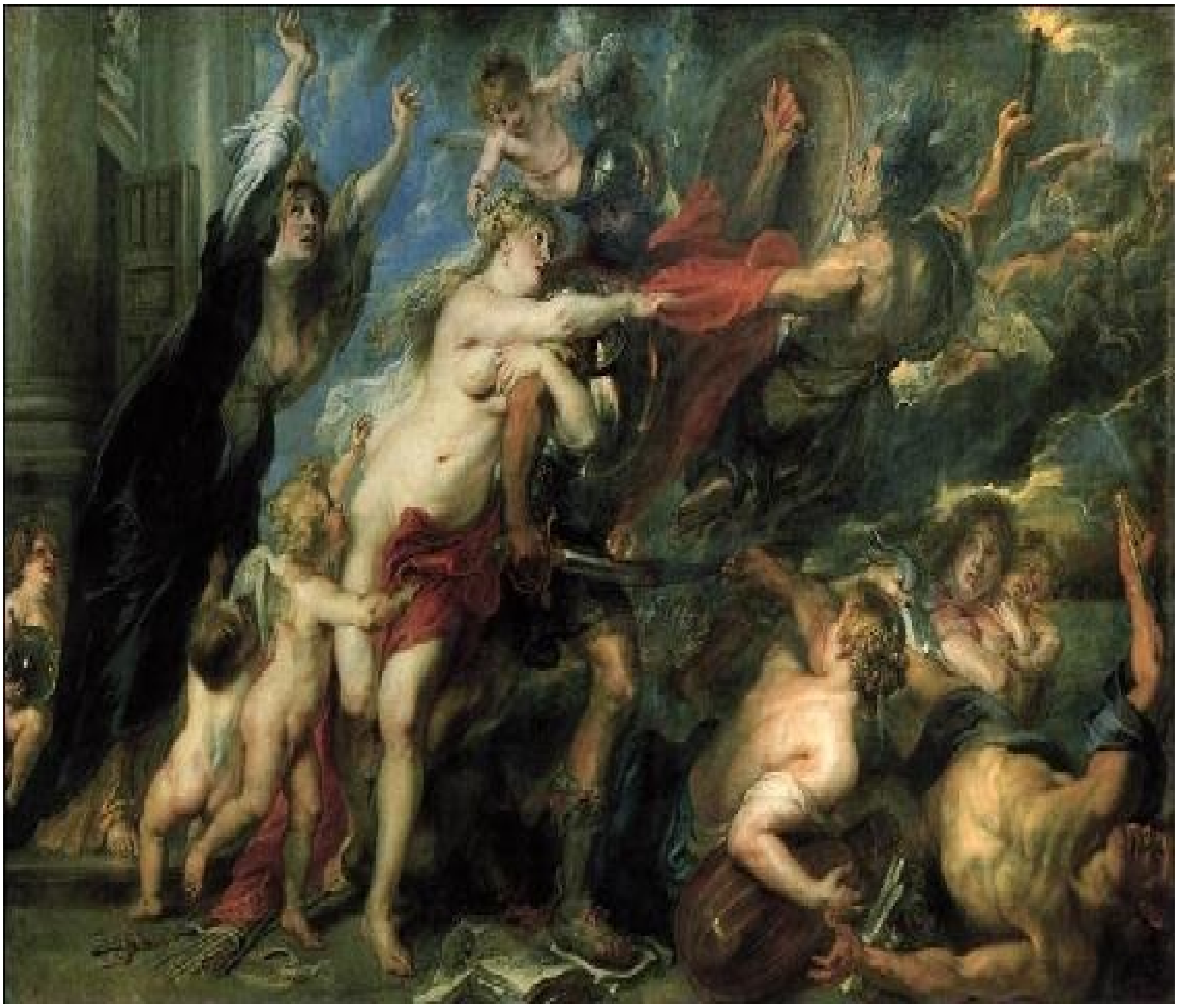
Tereus Confronted with the Head of His Son Itylus

1638
195 x 267 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



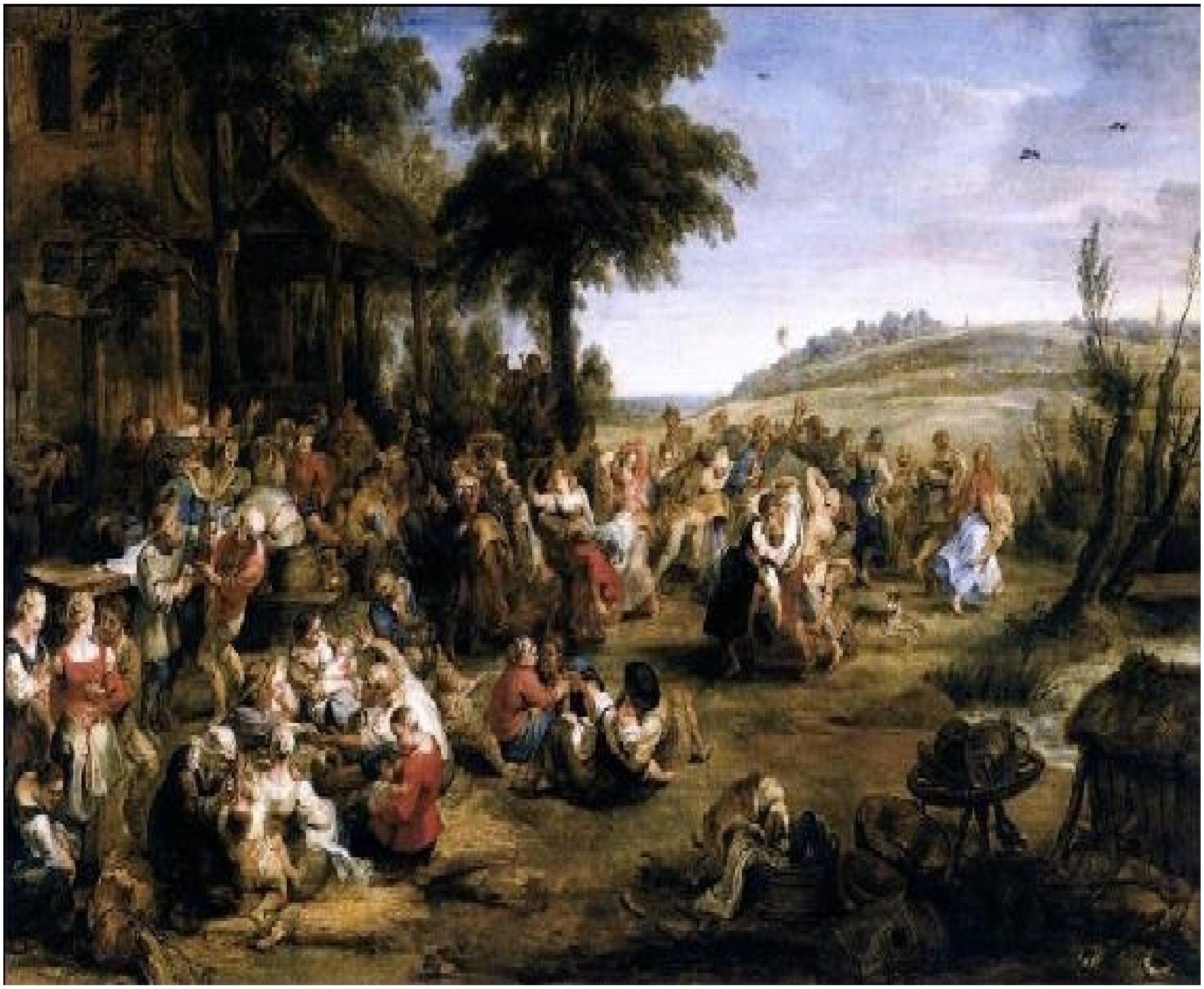
The Consequences of War

1638
206 x 342 cm
Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy



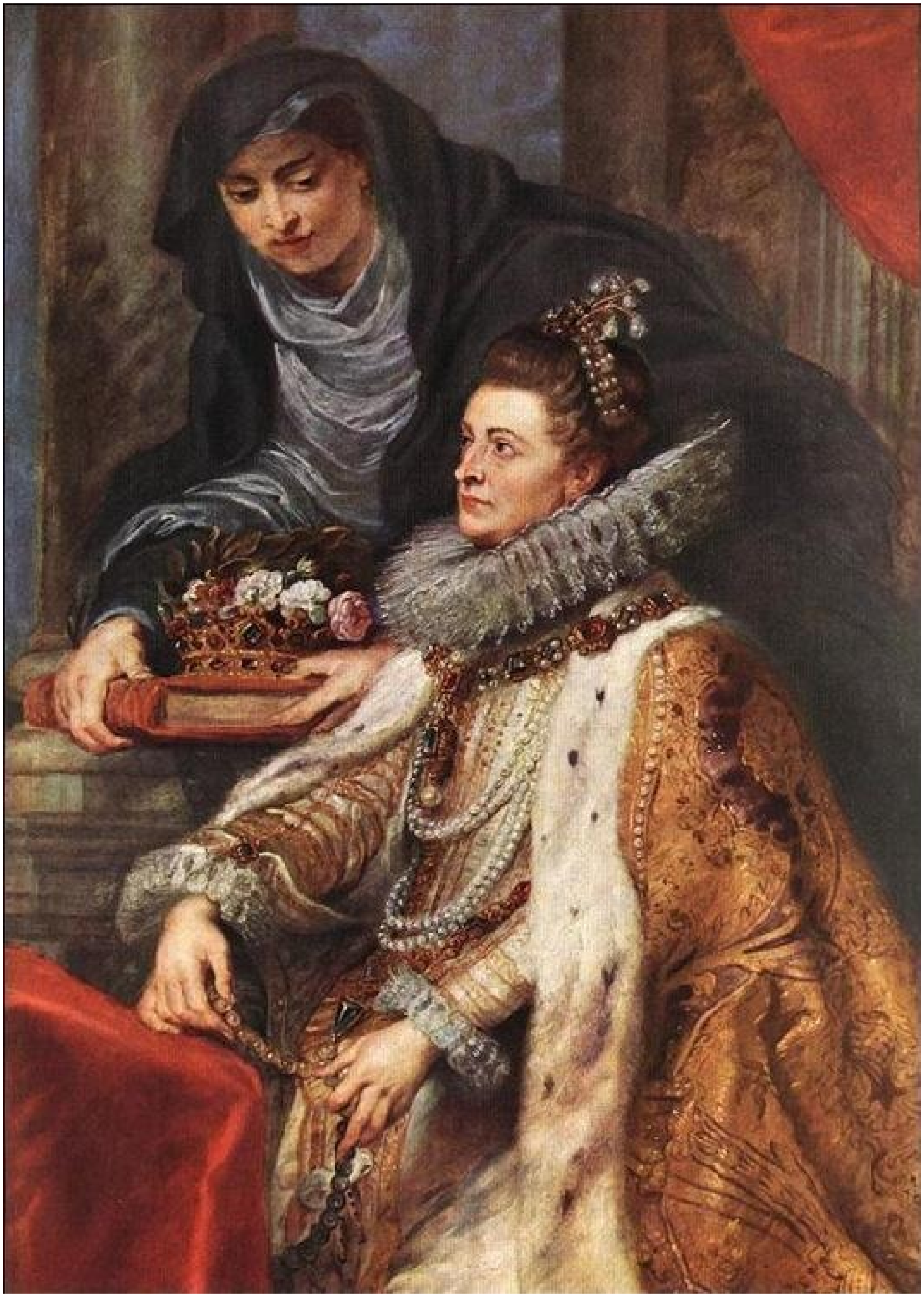
The Kermesse

1638
149 x 261 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



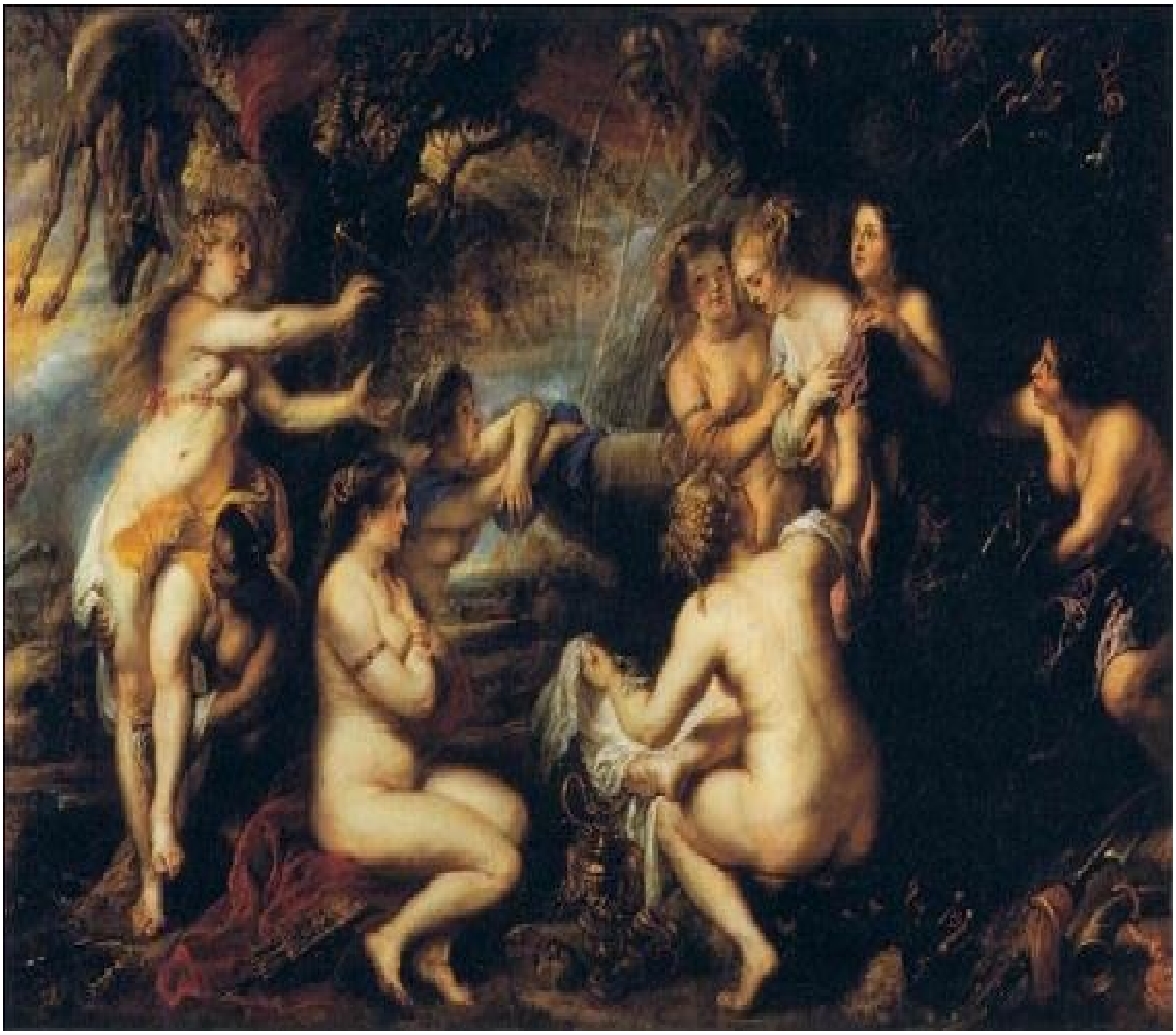
Altarpiece of St. Ildefonso (right panel)

c.1639
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



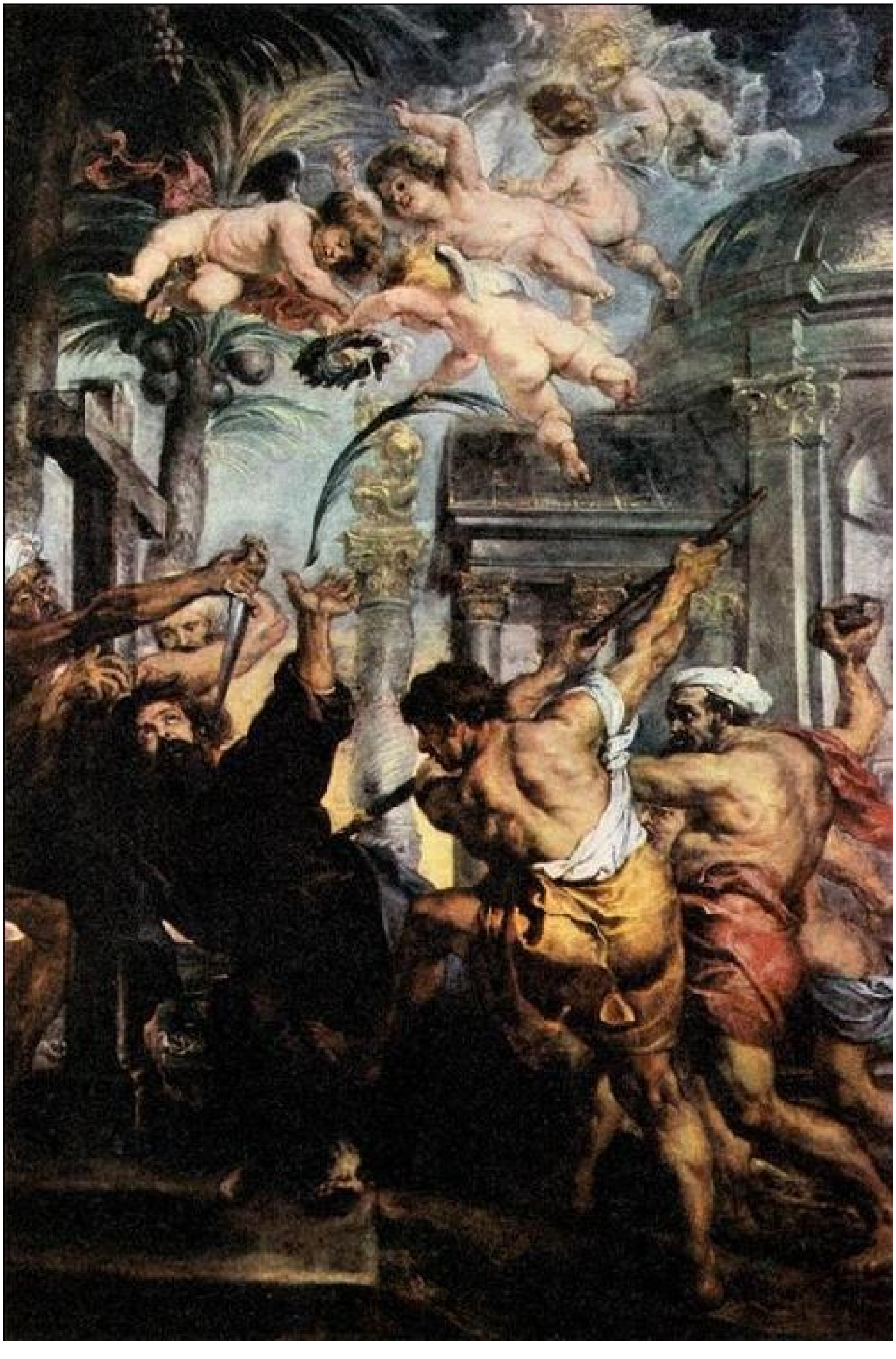
Diana and Callisto

c.1639
202 x 323 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



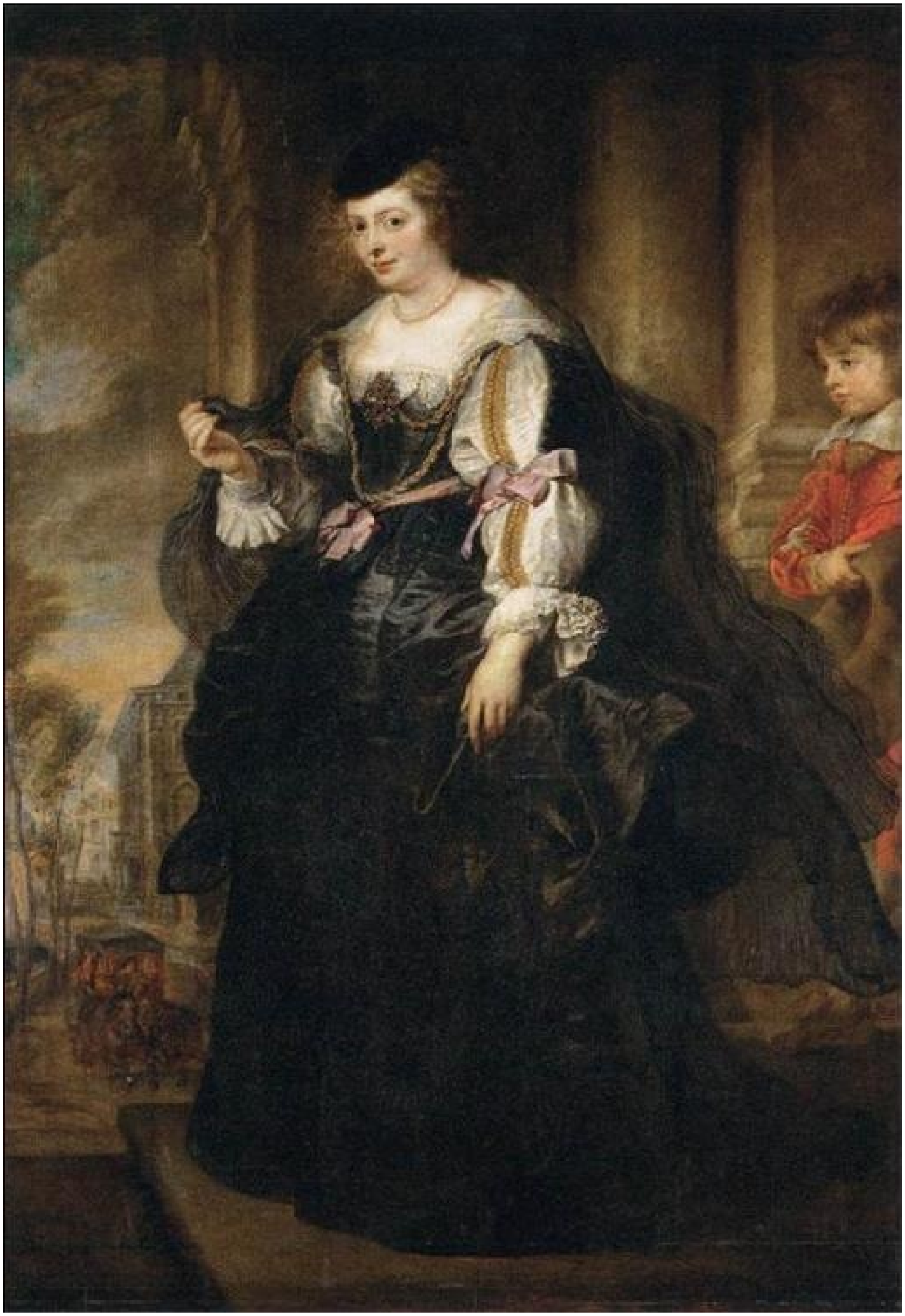
Martyrdom of St. Thomas

1639
380 x 253 cm
National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic



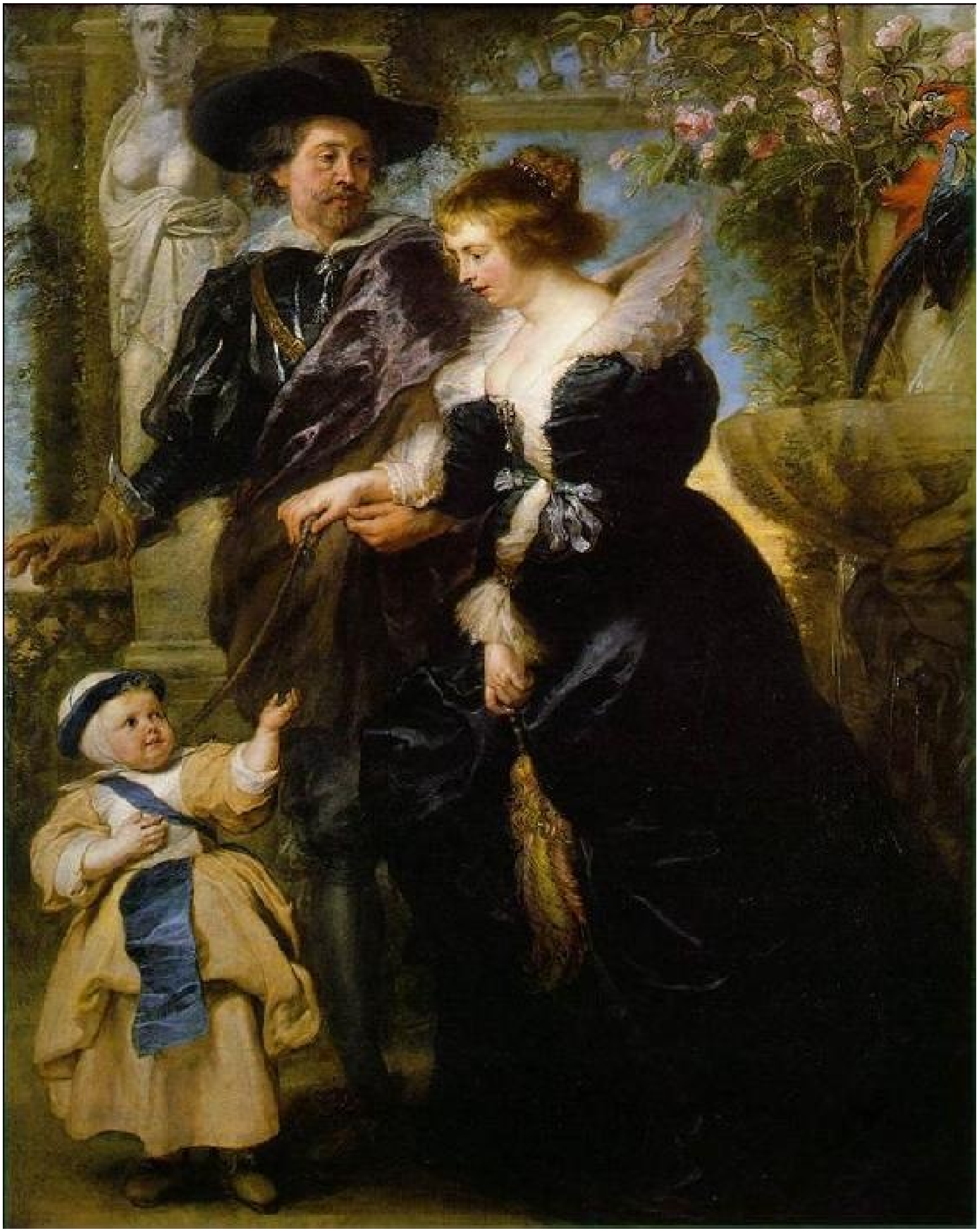
Portrait of Helene Fourment with a Coach

c.1639
195 x 132 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



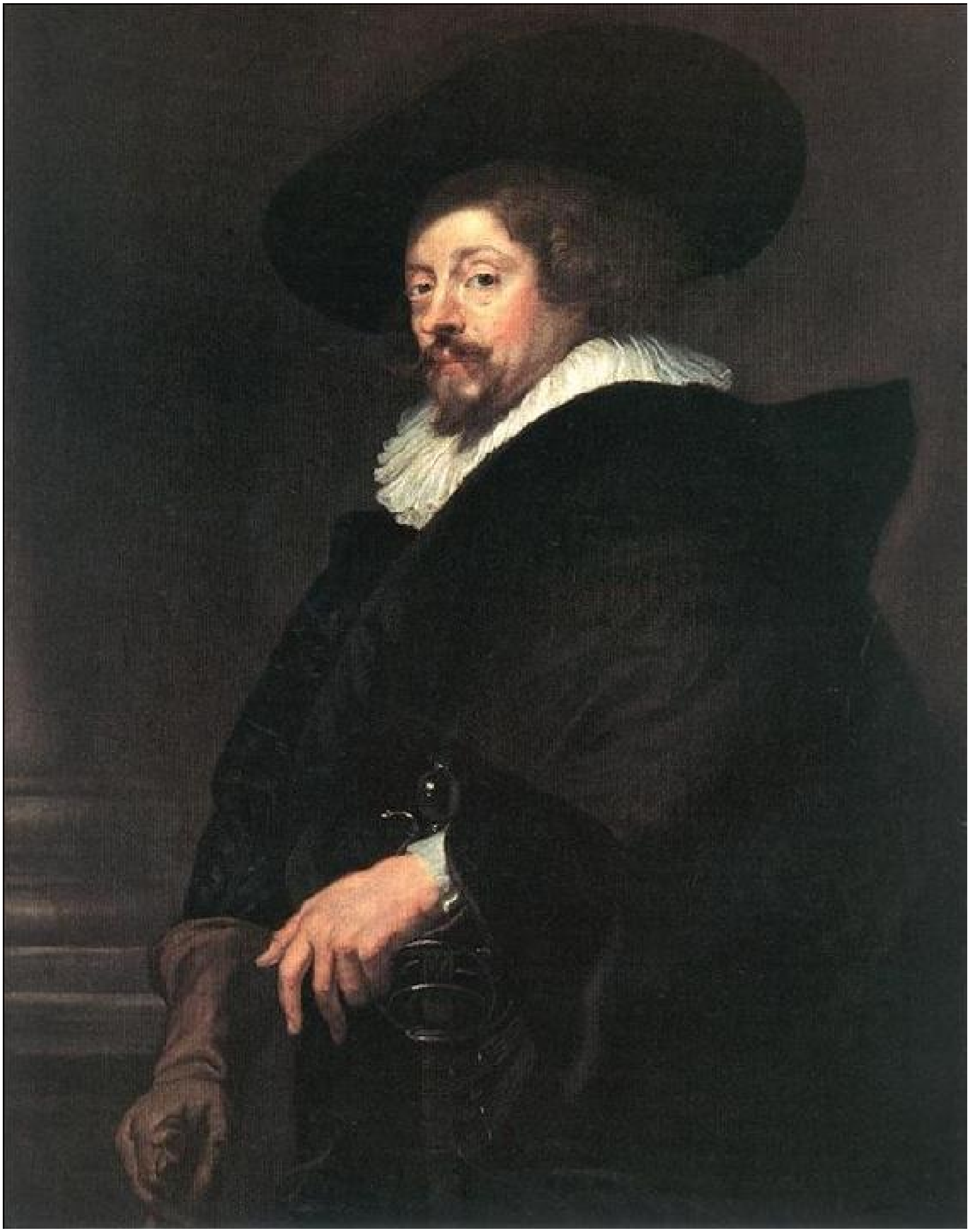
Rubens Rubens his wife Helena Fourment and their son Peter Paul

c.1639
203.8 x 158.1 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City



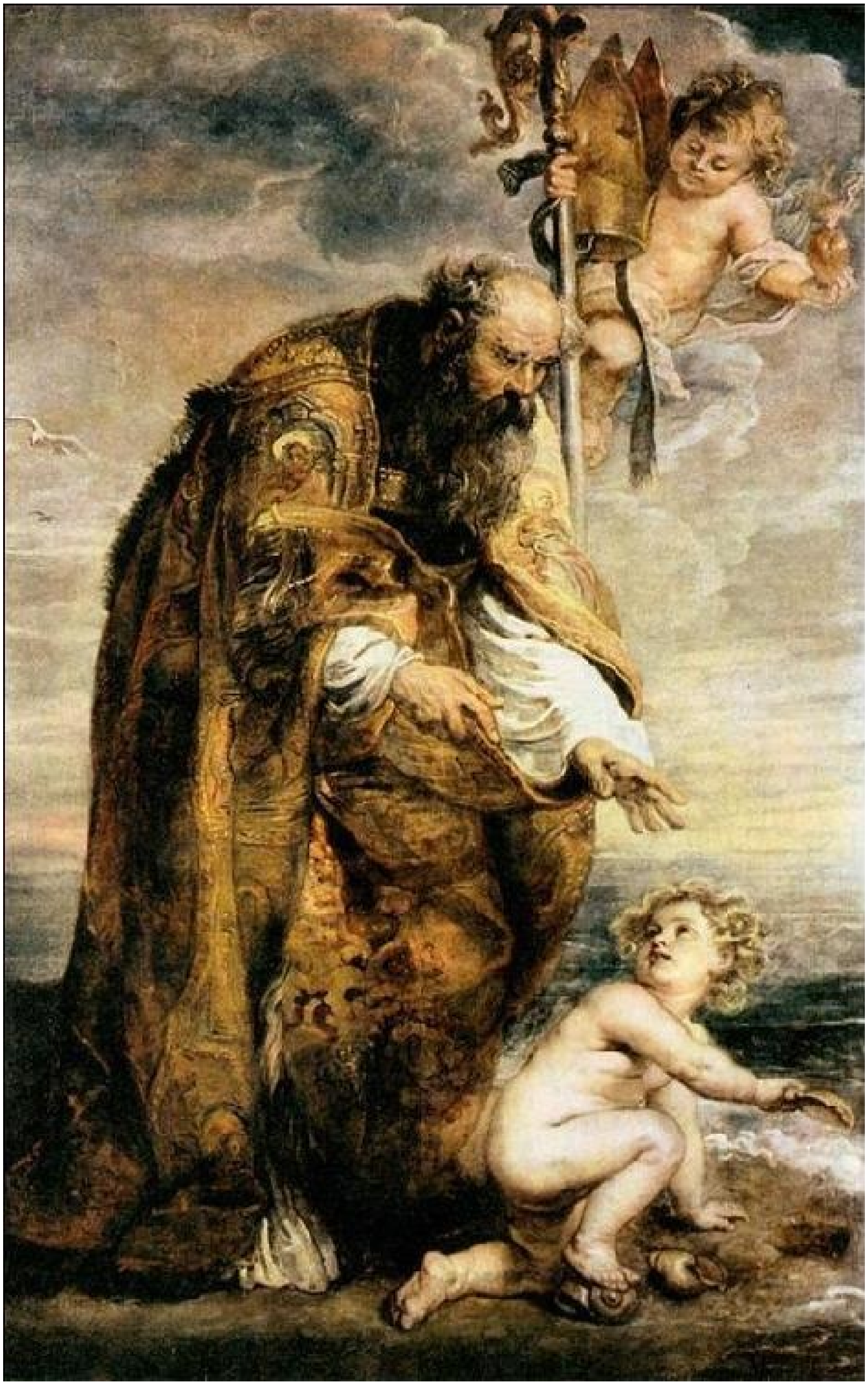
Self-Portrait

1639
109.5 x 85 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



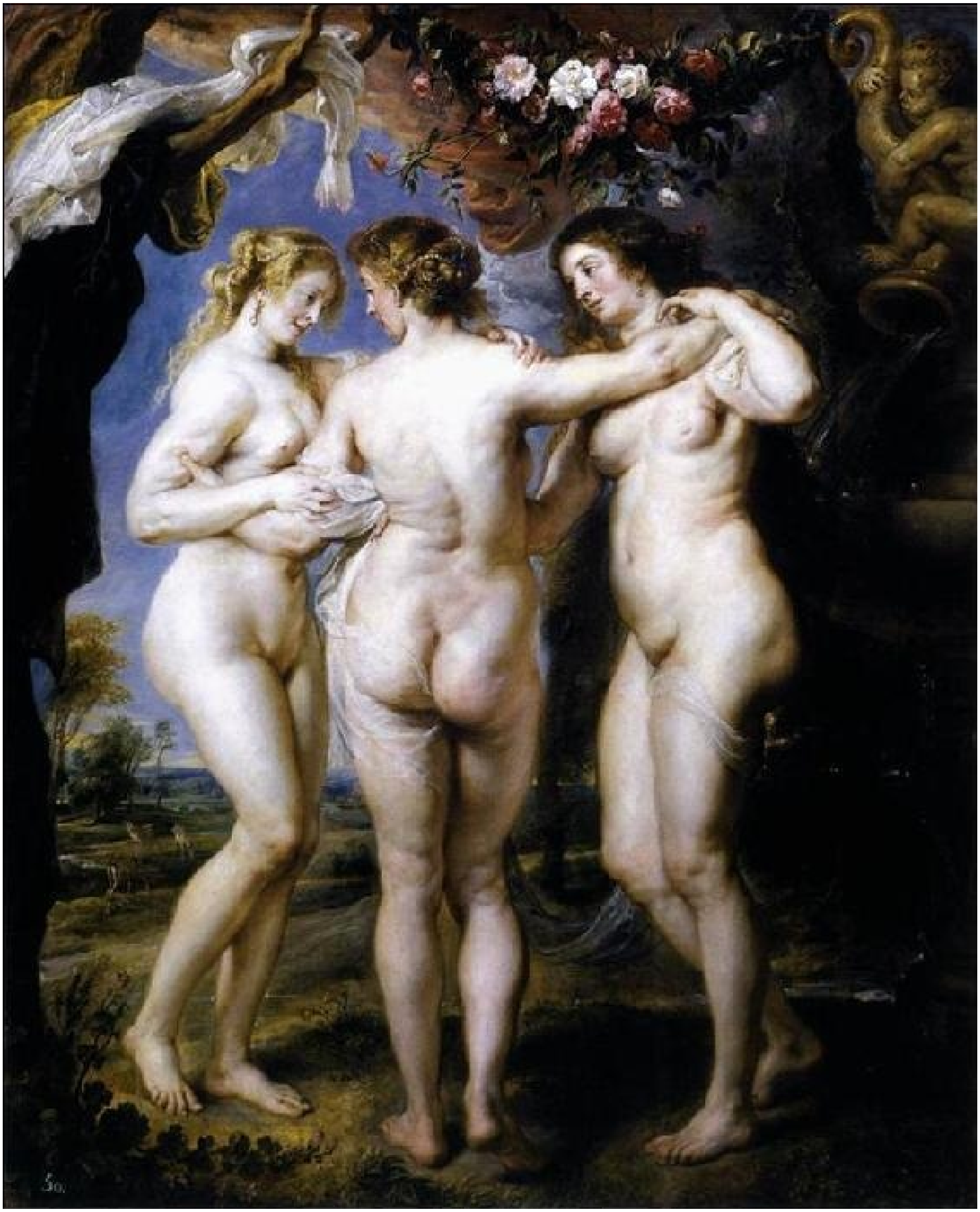
St. Augustine

1639
263 x 175 cm
National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic



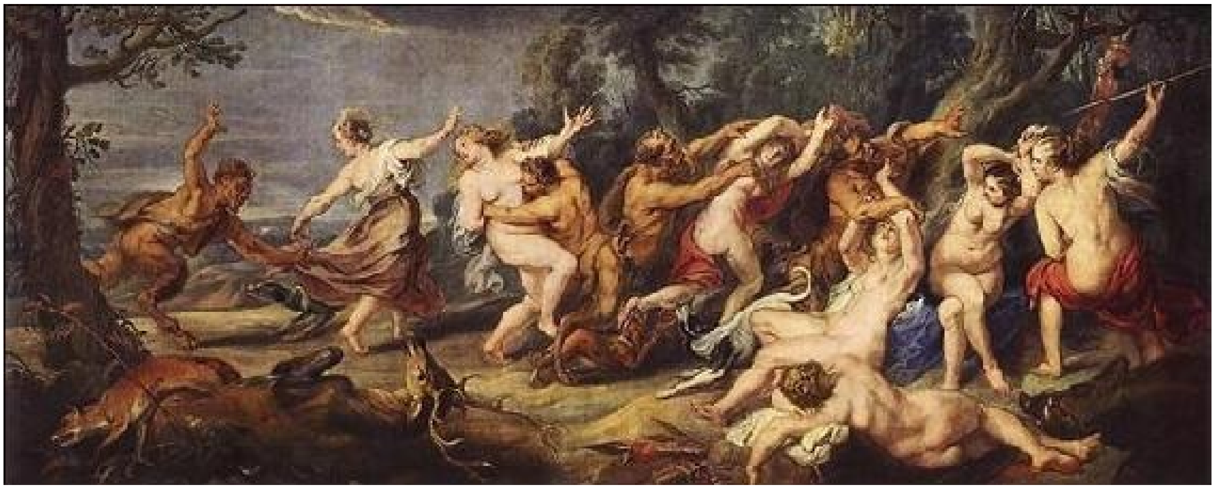
The Three Graces

1639
221 x 181 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain


50

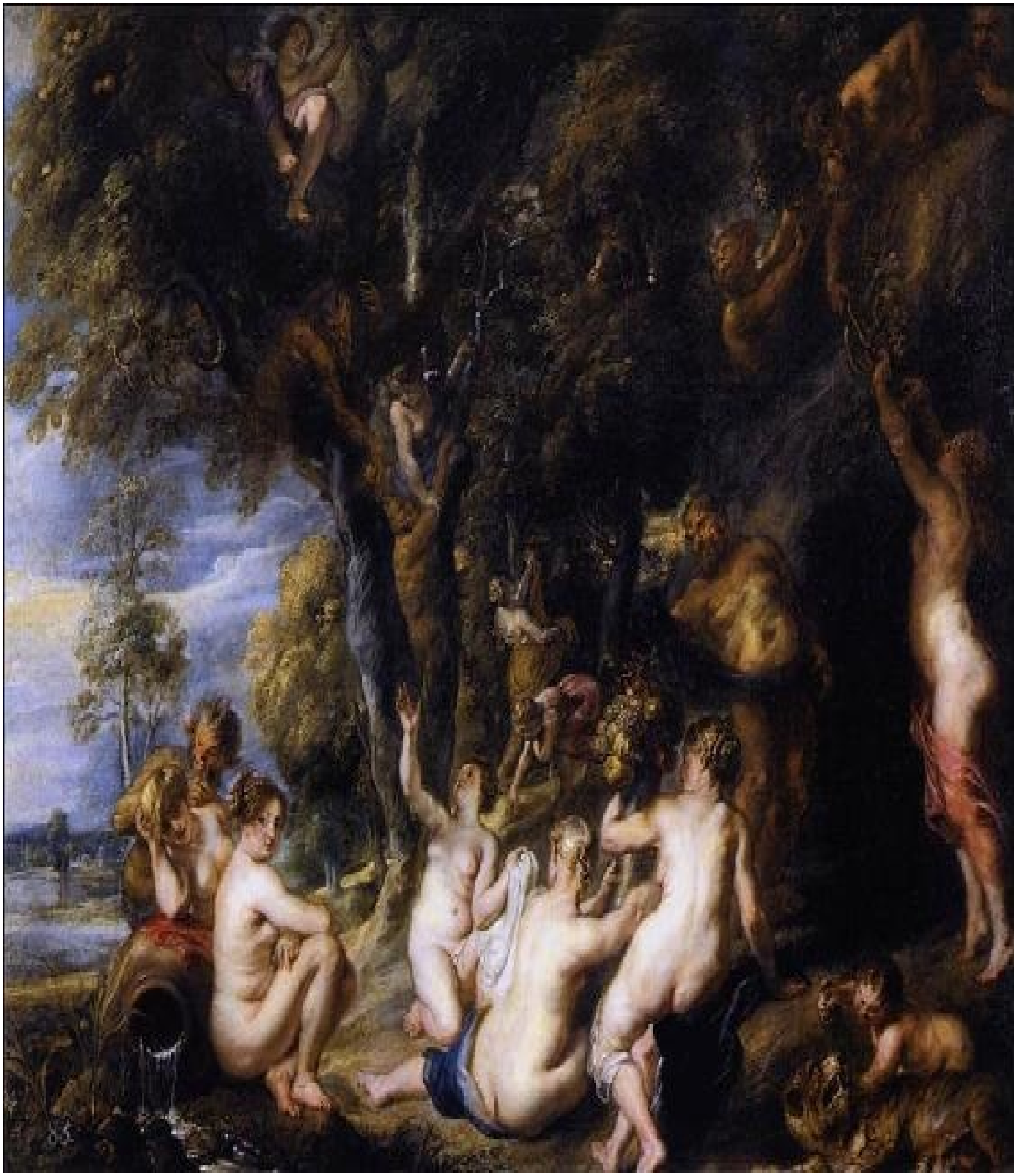
Diana and her Nymphs Surprised by the Fauns

1640
128 x 314 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



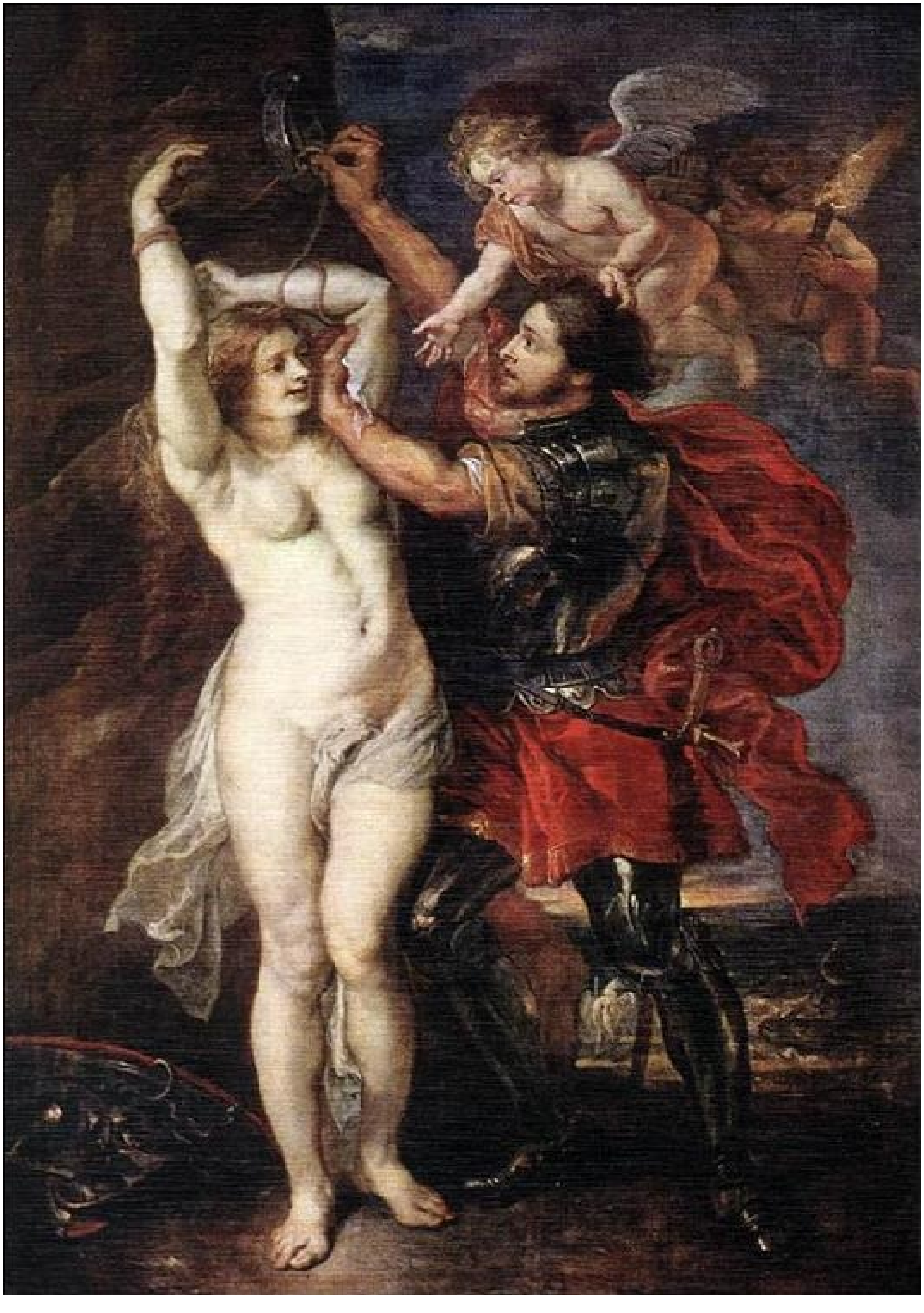
Nymphs and Satyrs

1640
136 x 165 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



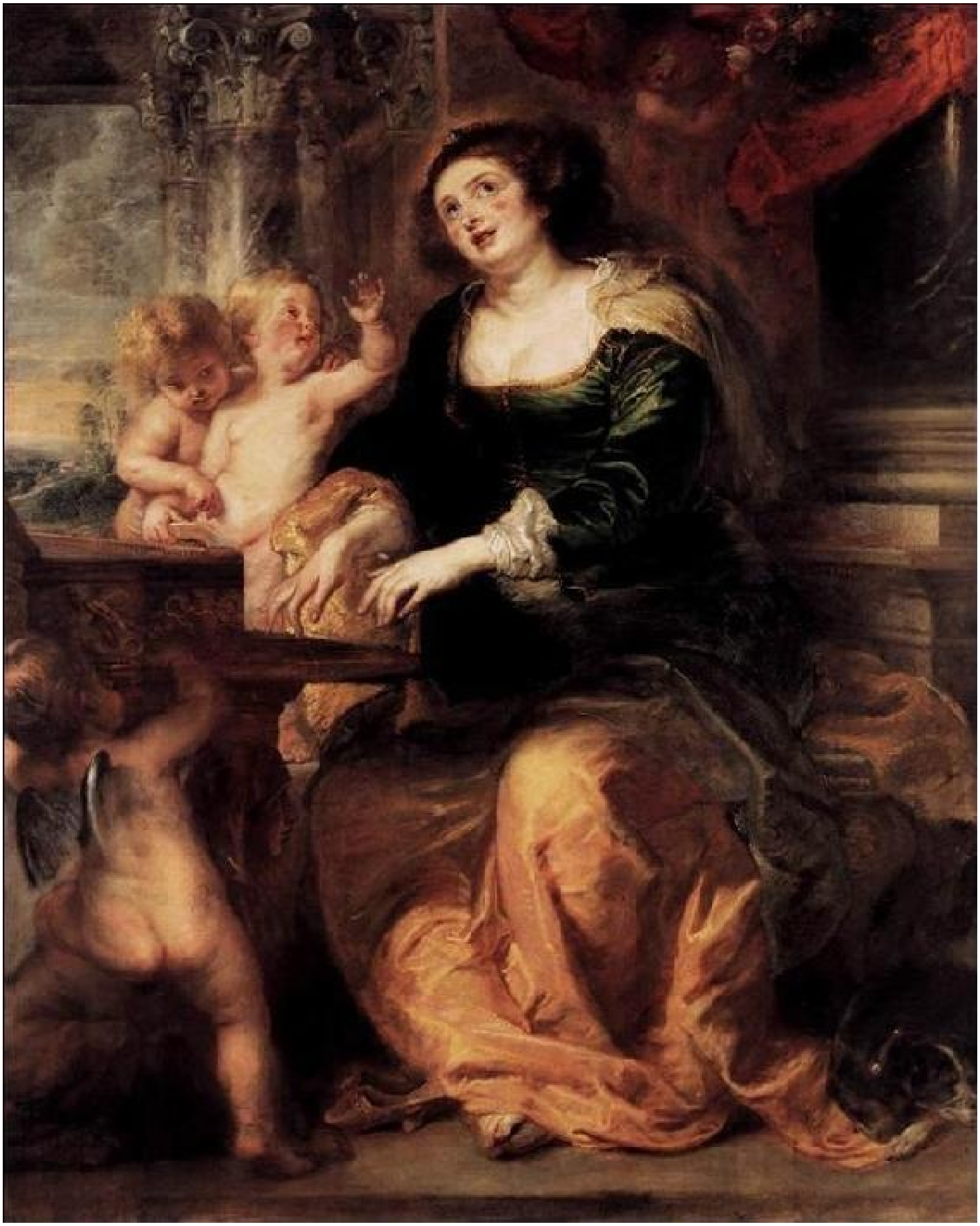
Perseus and Andromeda

1640
265 x 160 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



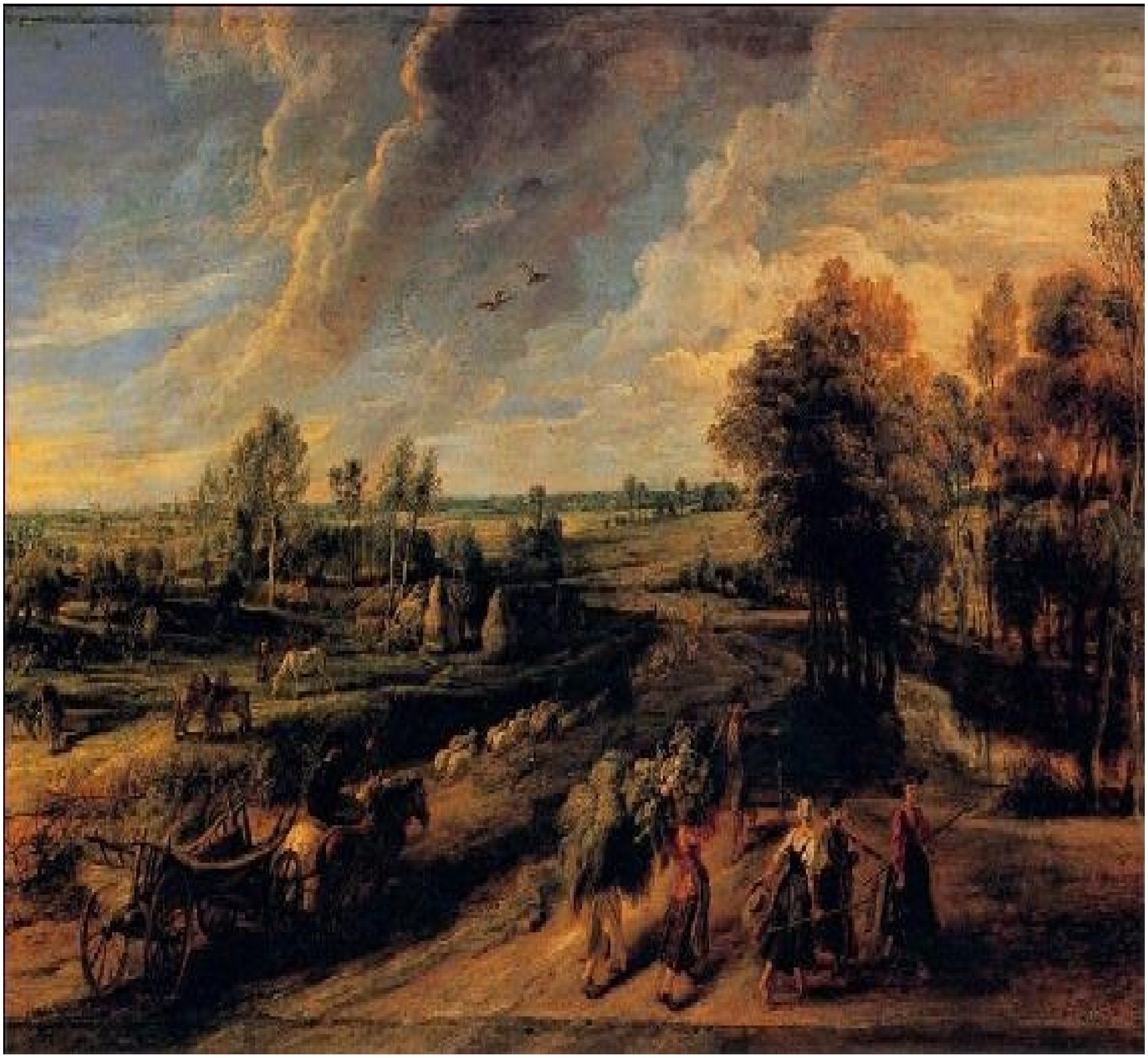
St. Cecilia

1640
177 x 139 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany



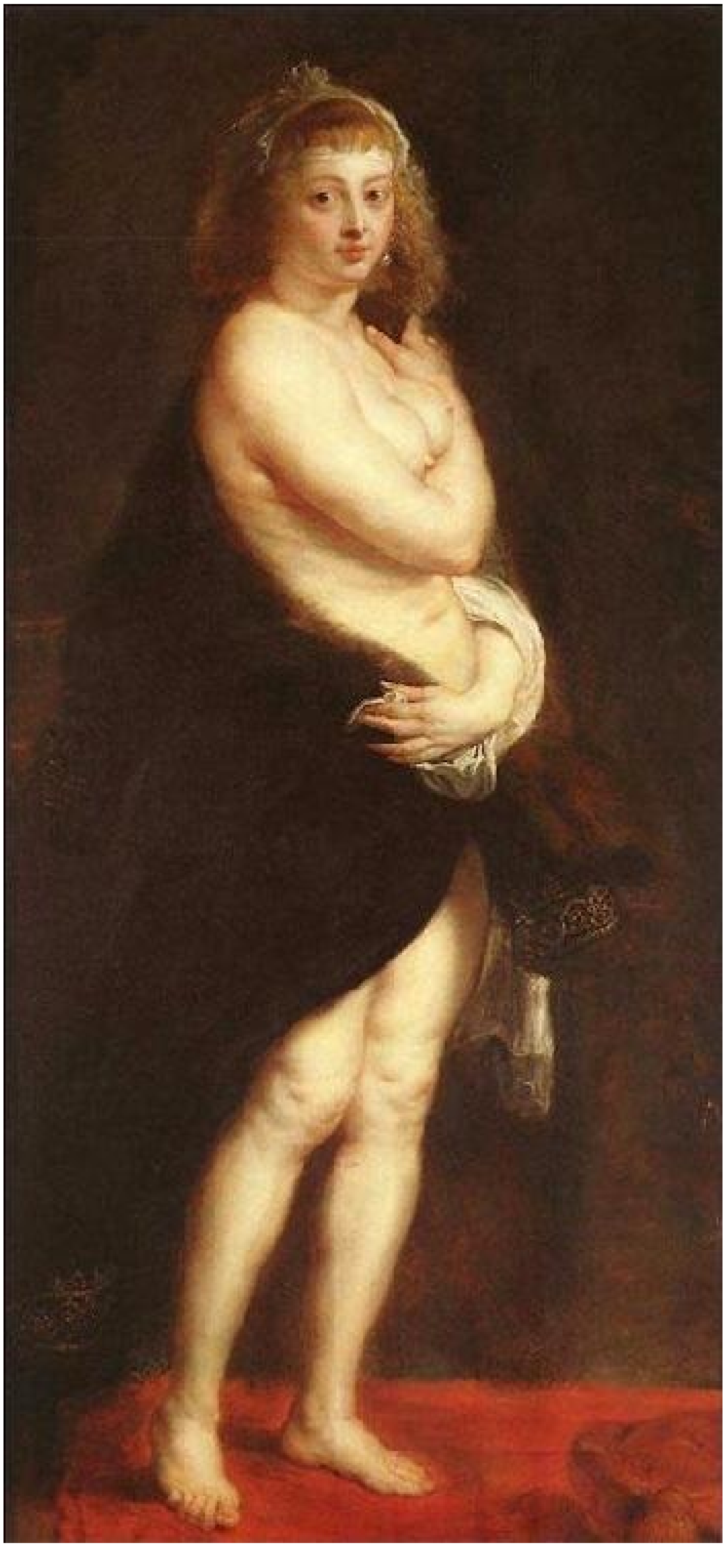
The Return of the Farm Workers from the Fields

c.1640
121 x 194 cm
Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy



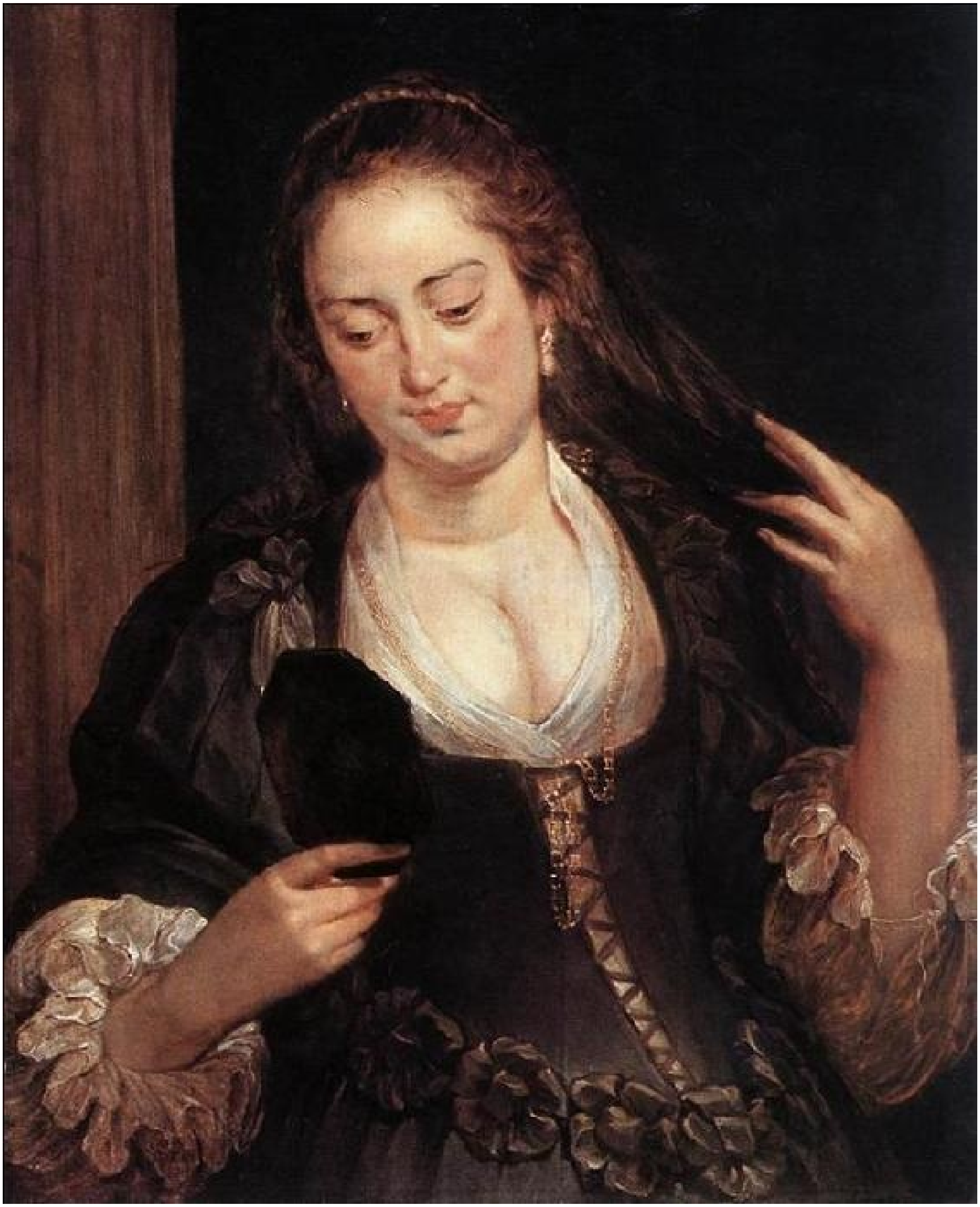
Venus in Fur Coat

c.1640
176 x 83 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



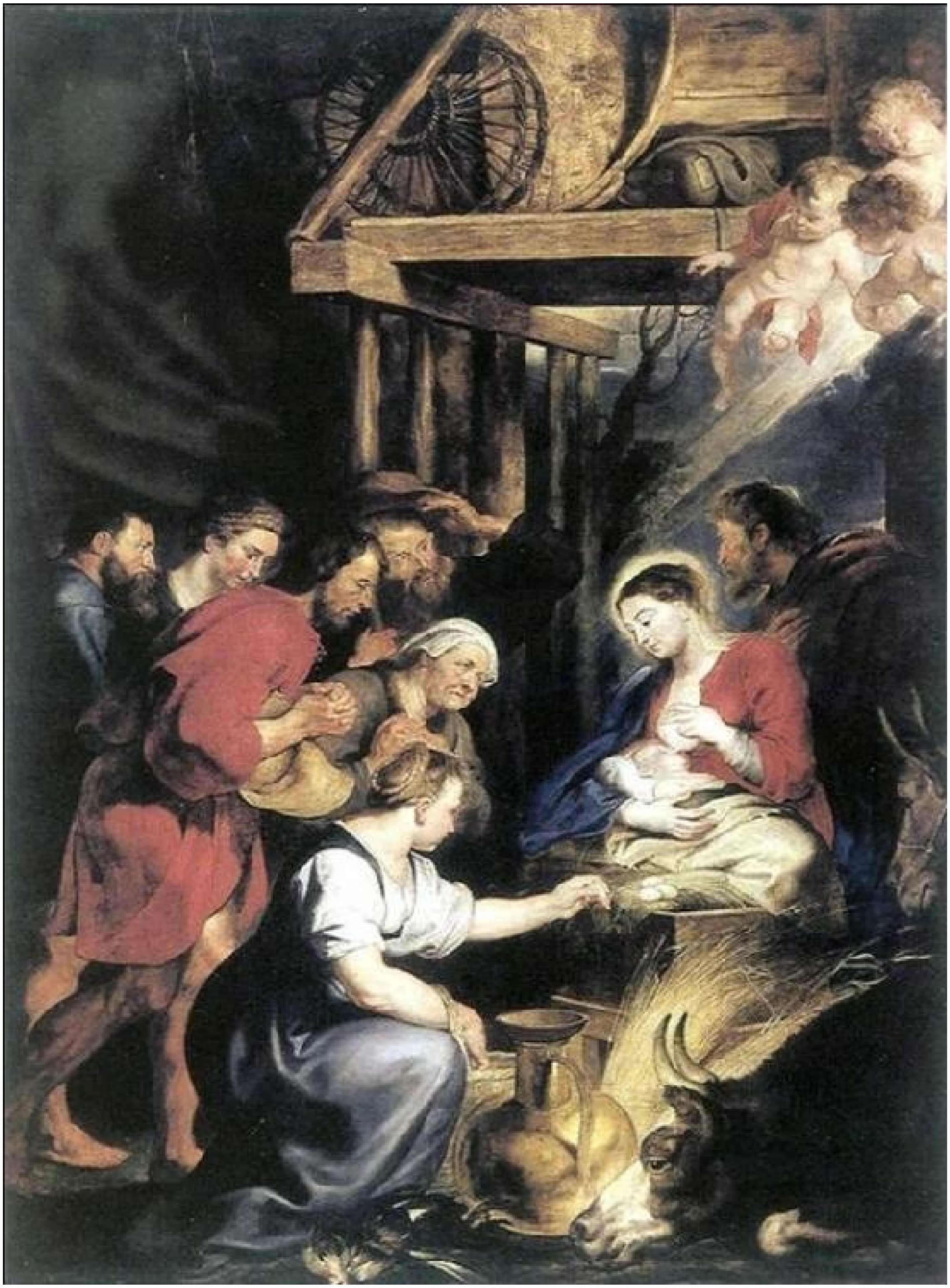
Woman with a Mirror

c.1640
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, Germany



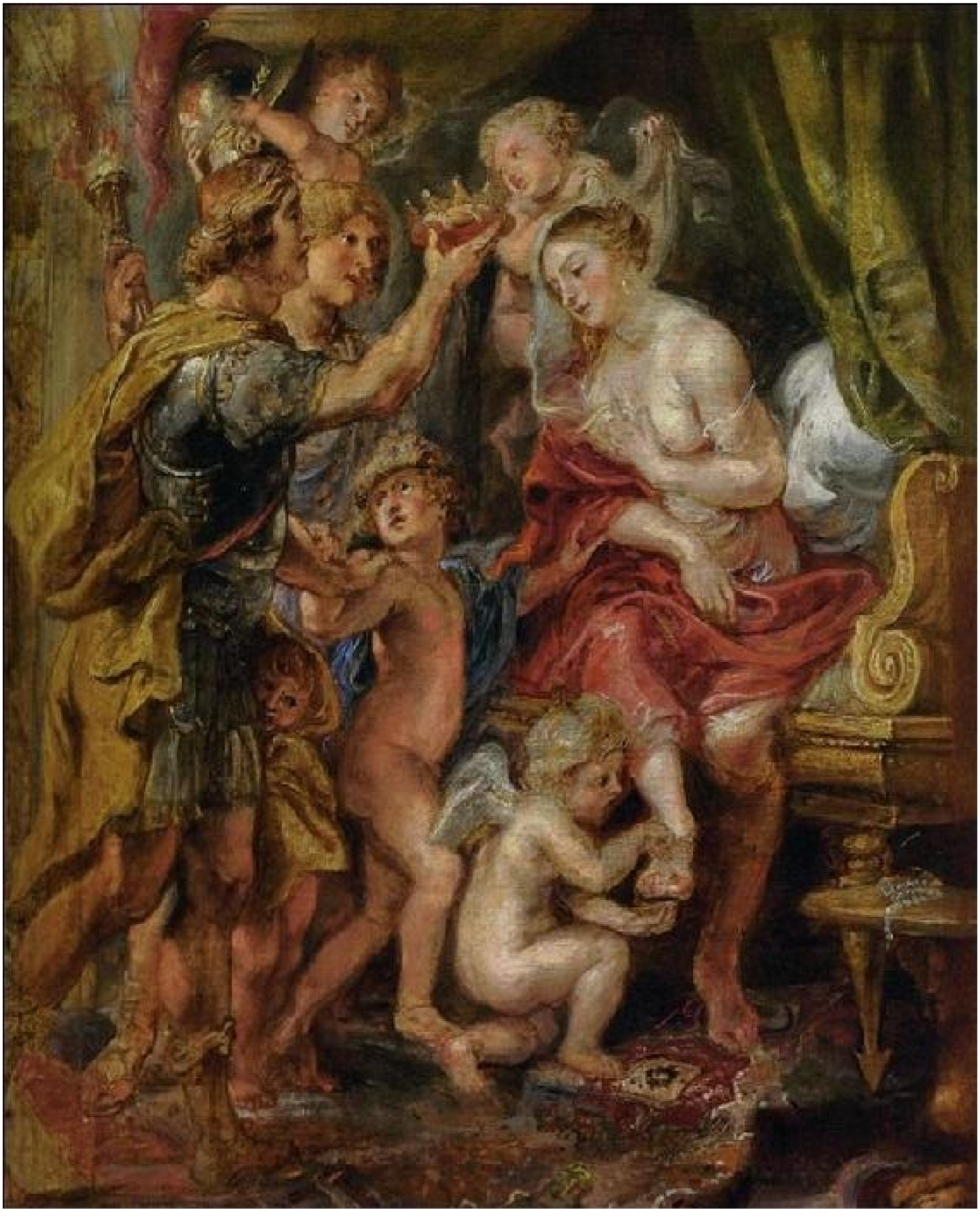
Adoration of the Shepherds

Date unknown



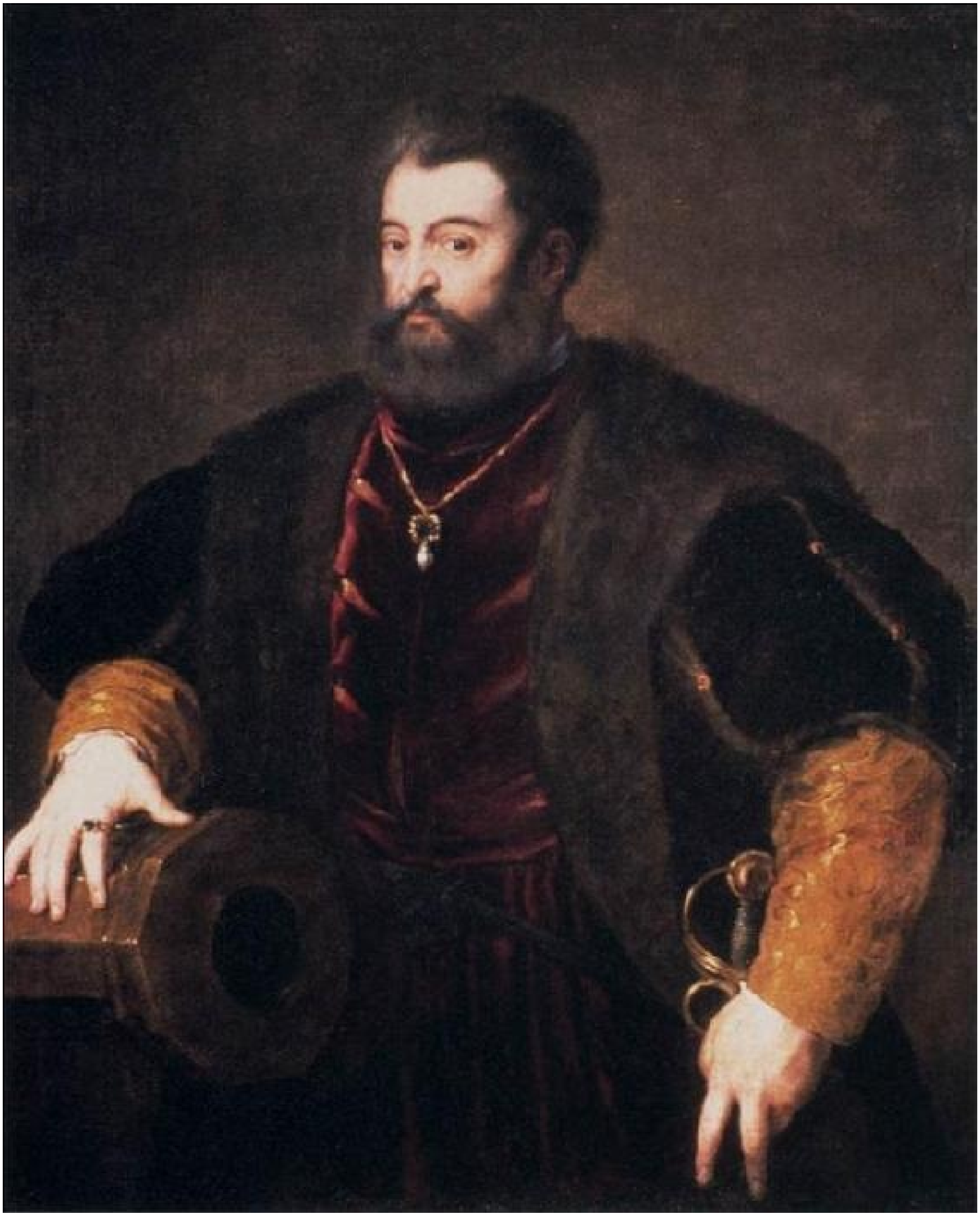
Alexander and Roxana

40 x 35.3 cm
Private Collection
Date unknown



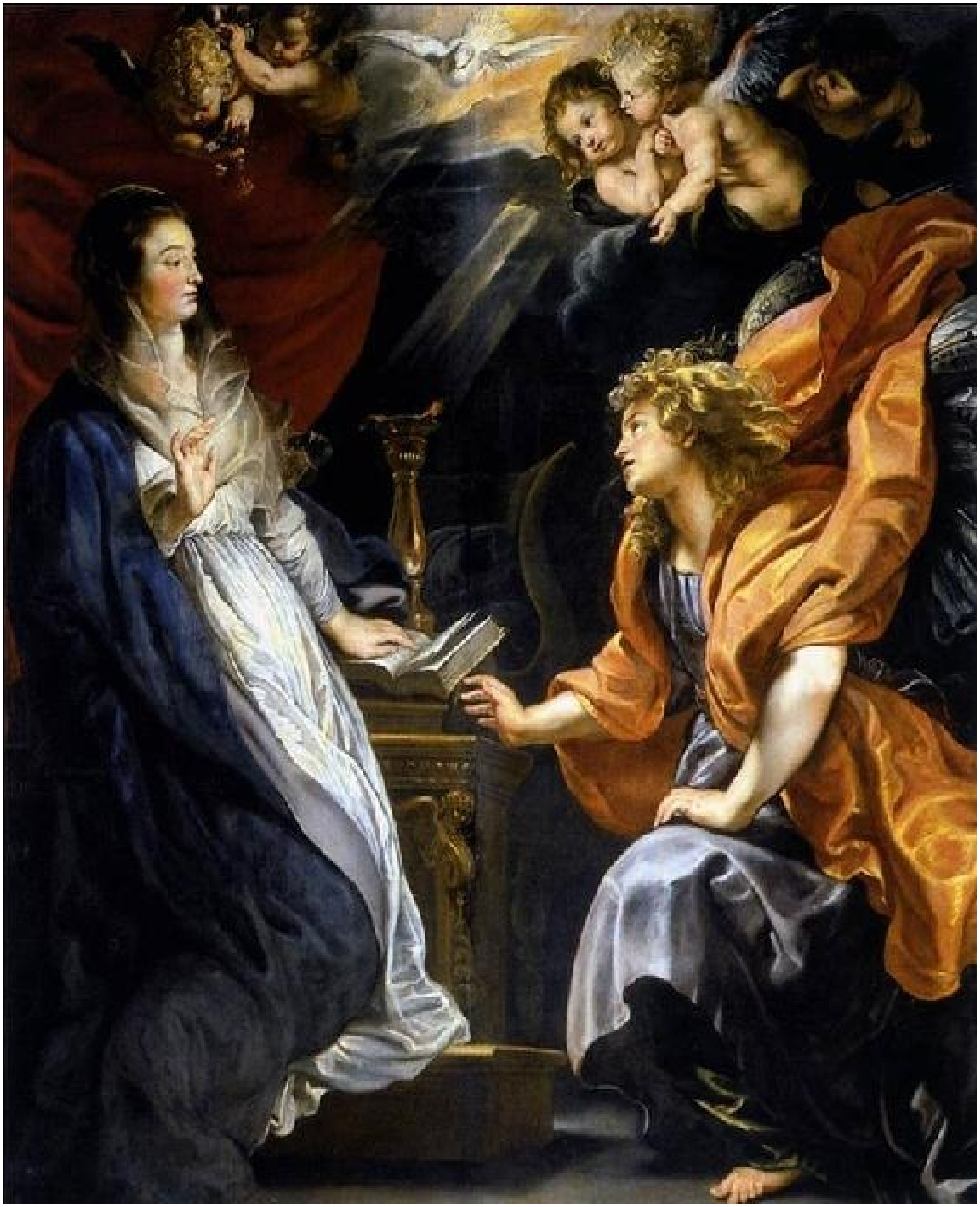
Alfonso I d’Este, Duke of Ferrara

127 x 98 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City
Date unknown



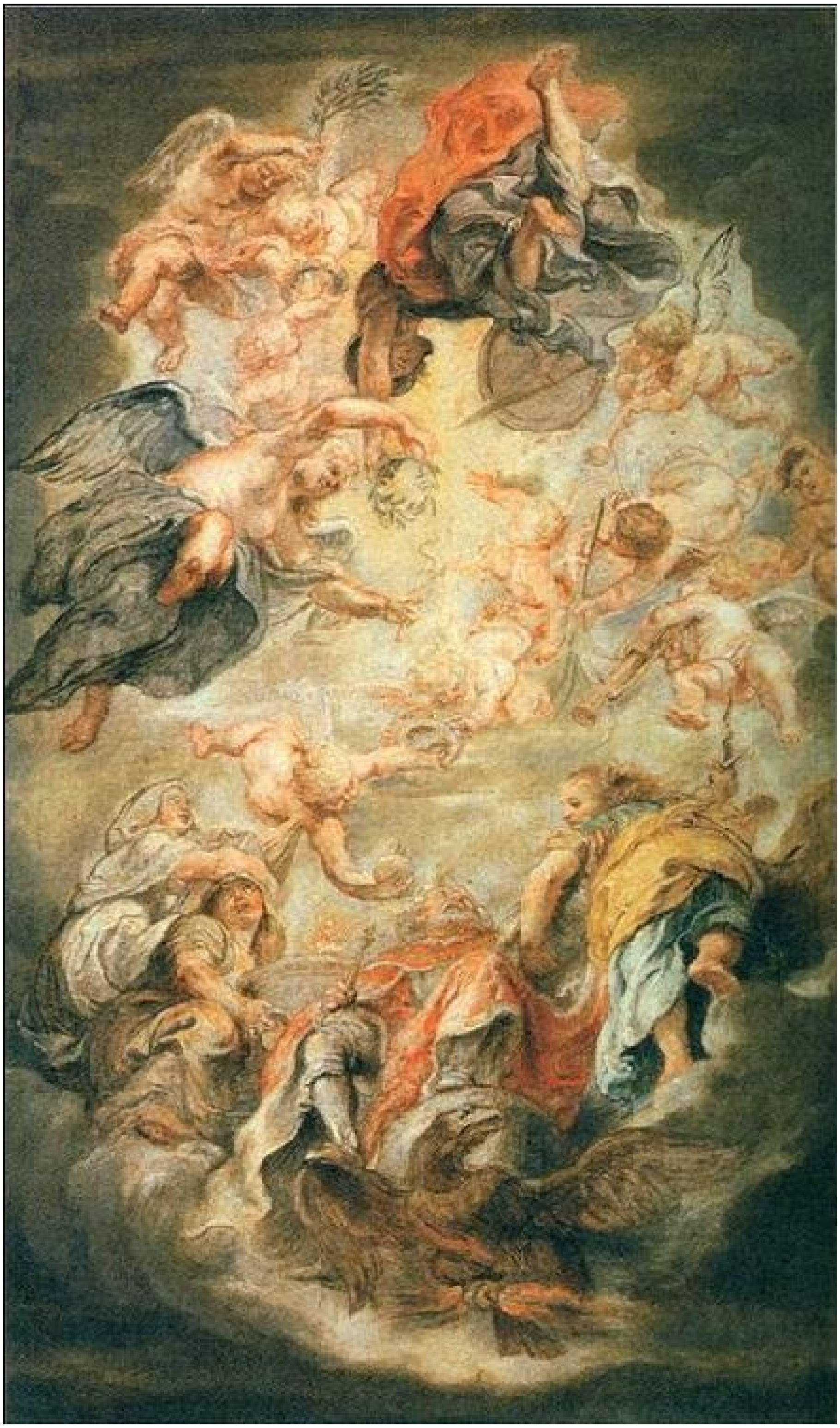
Annunciation

Date unknown



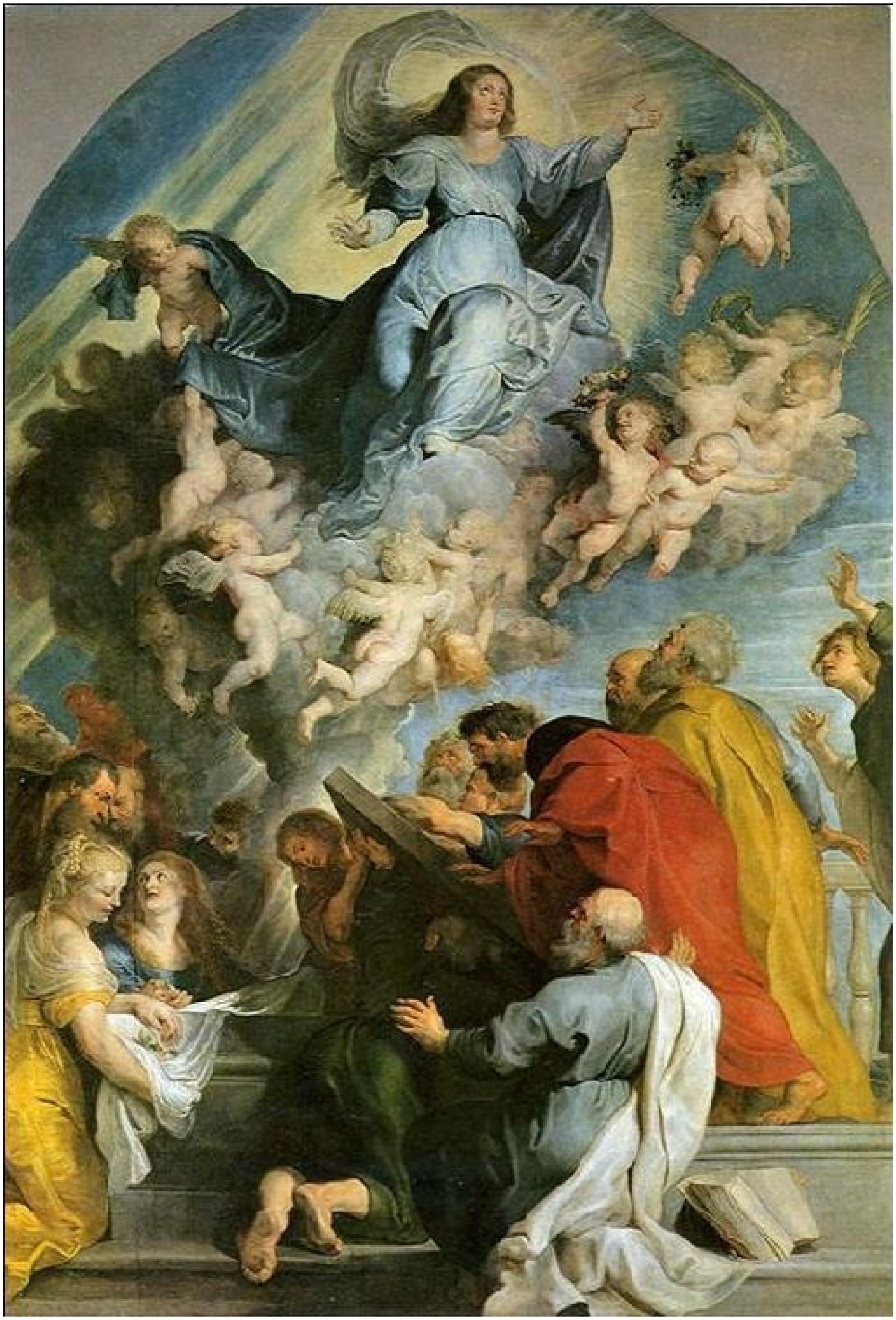
Apotheosis of King James I

Date unknown



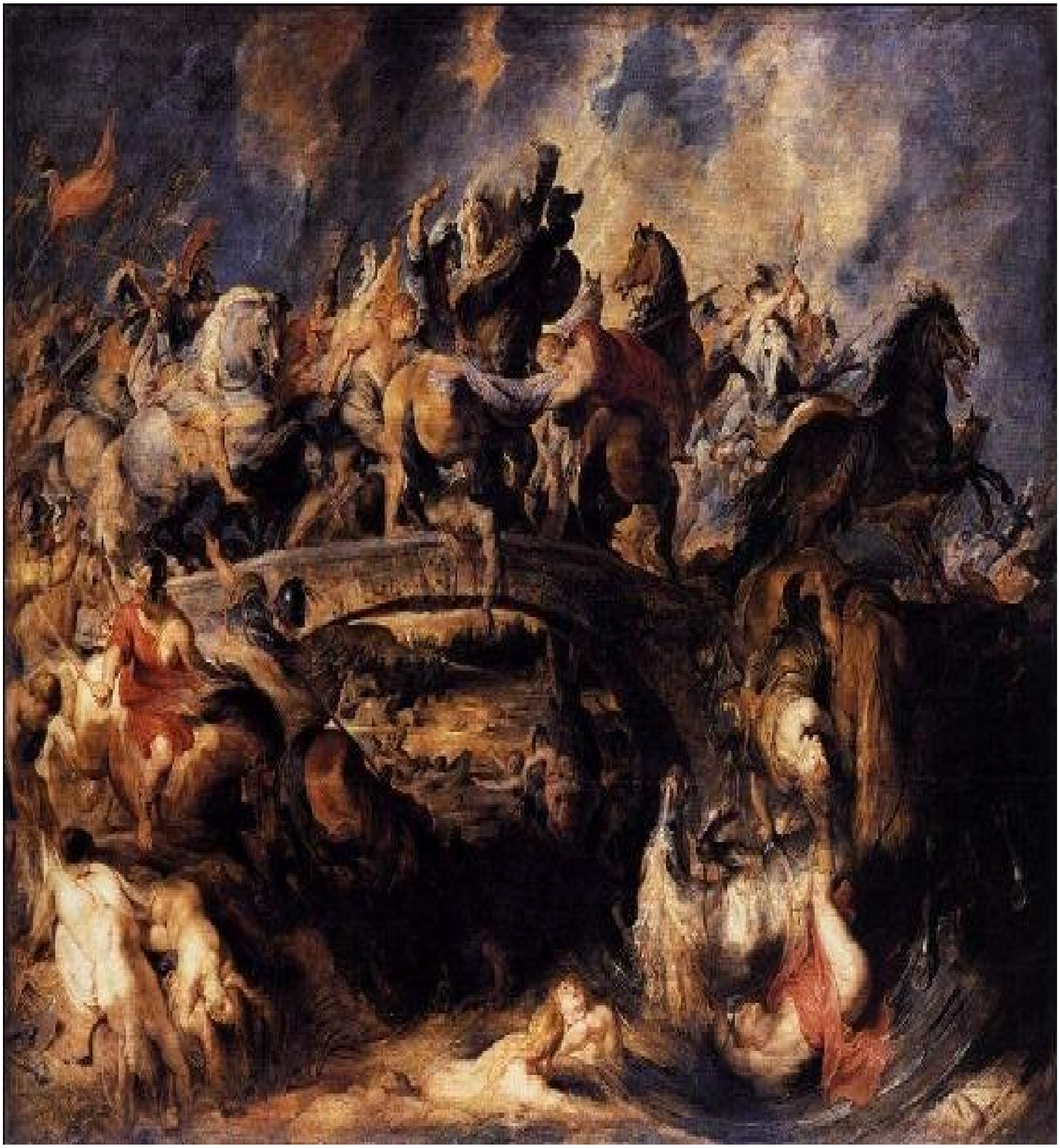
Assumption of Virgin

Date unknown



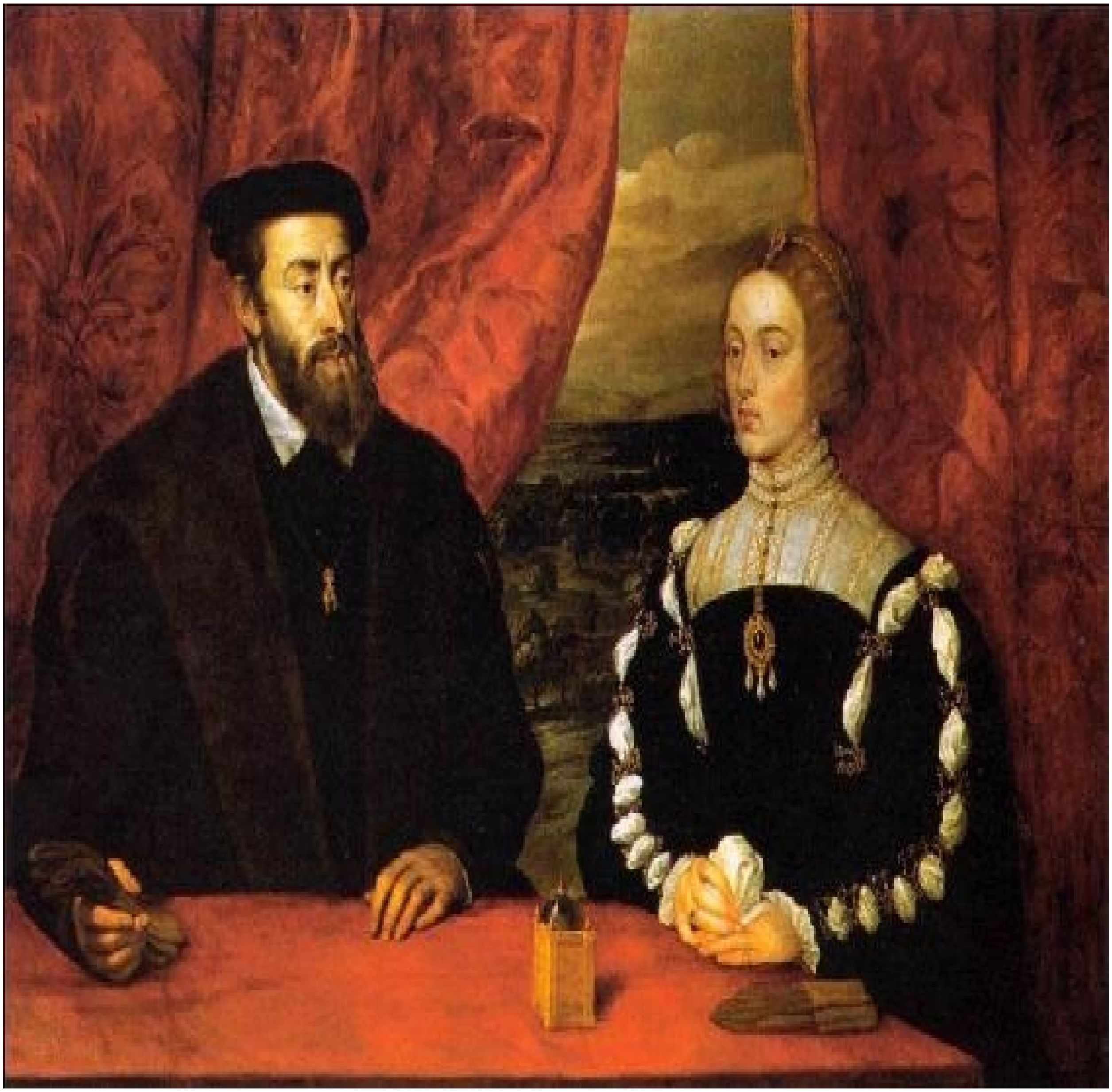
Battle of the Amazons

Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany
Date unknown



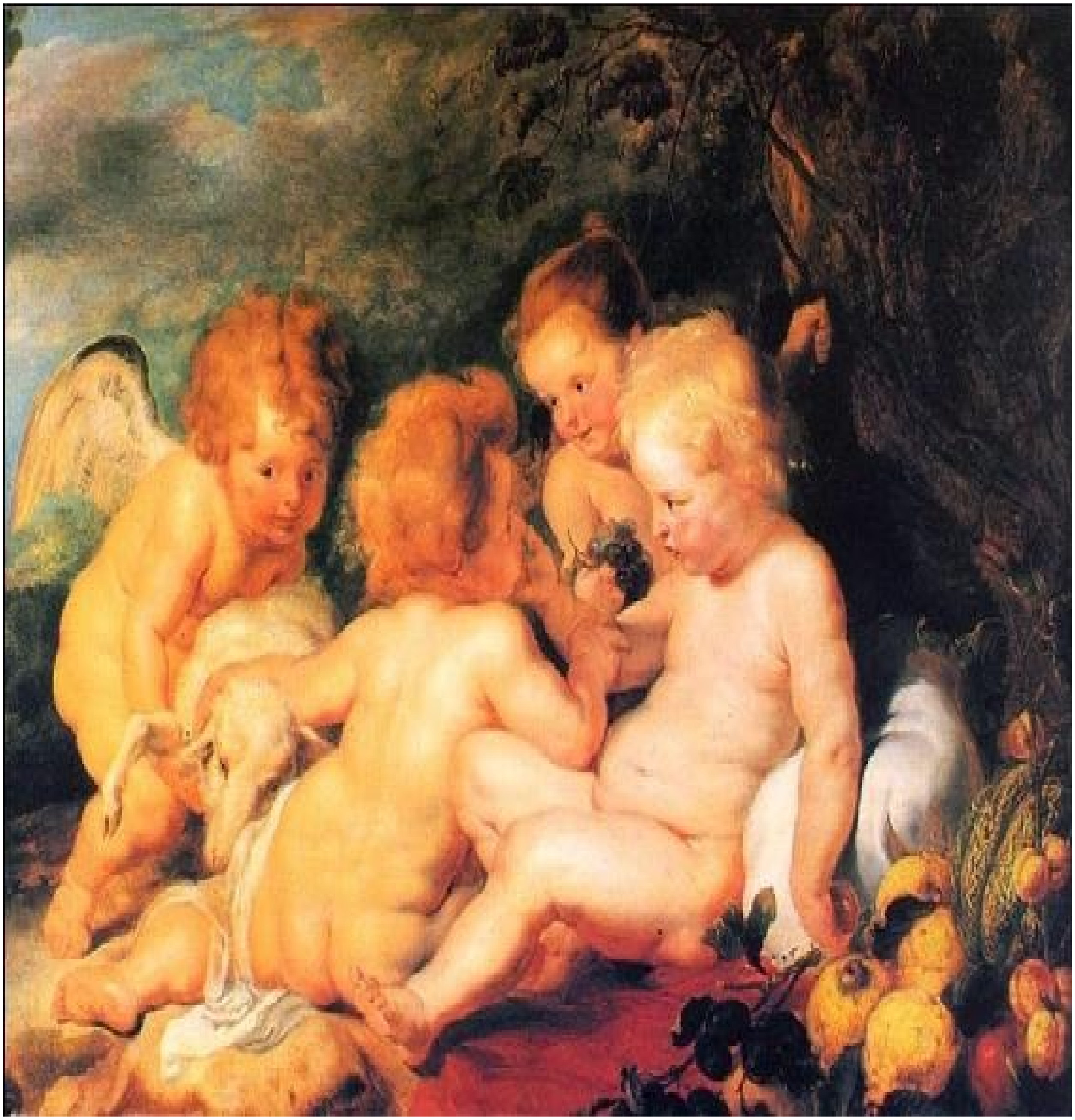
Charles V and the Empress Isabella

114 x 166 cm
Date unknown



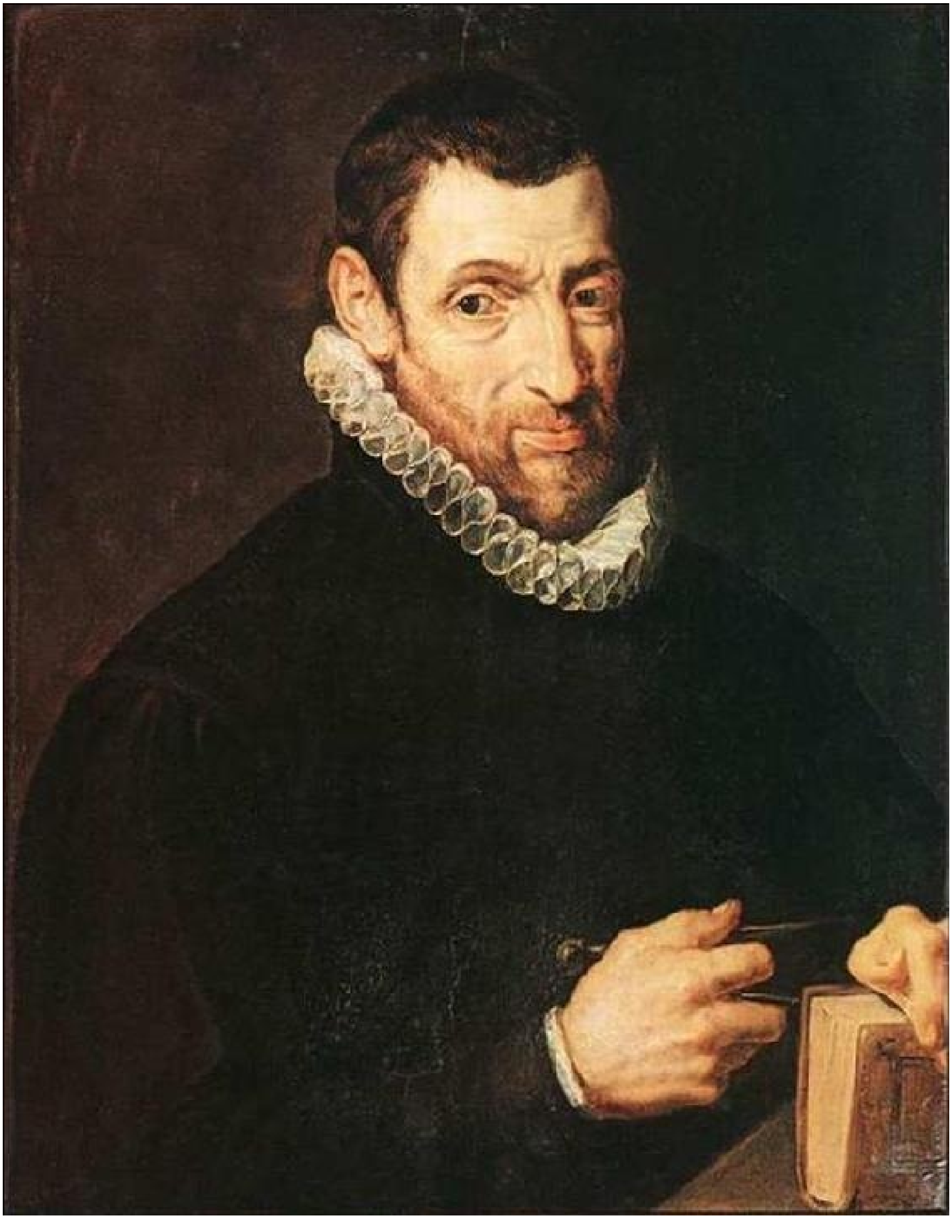
Christ and St. John with Angels

Date unknown



Christoffel Plantin

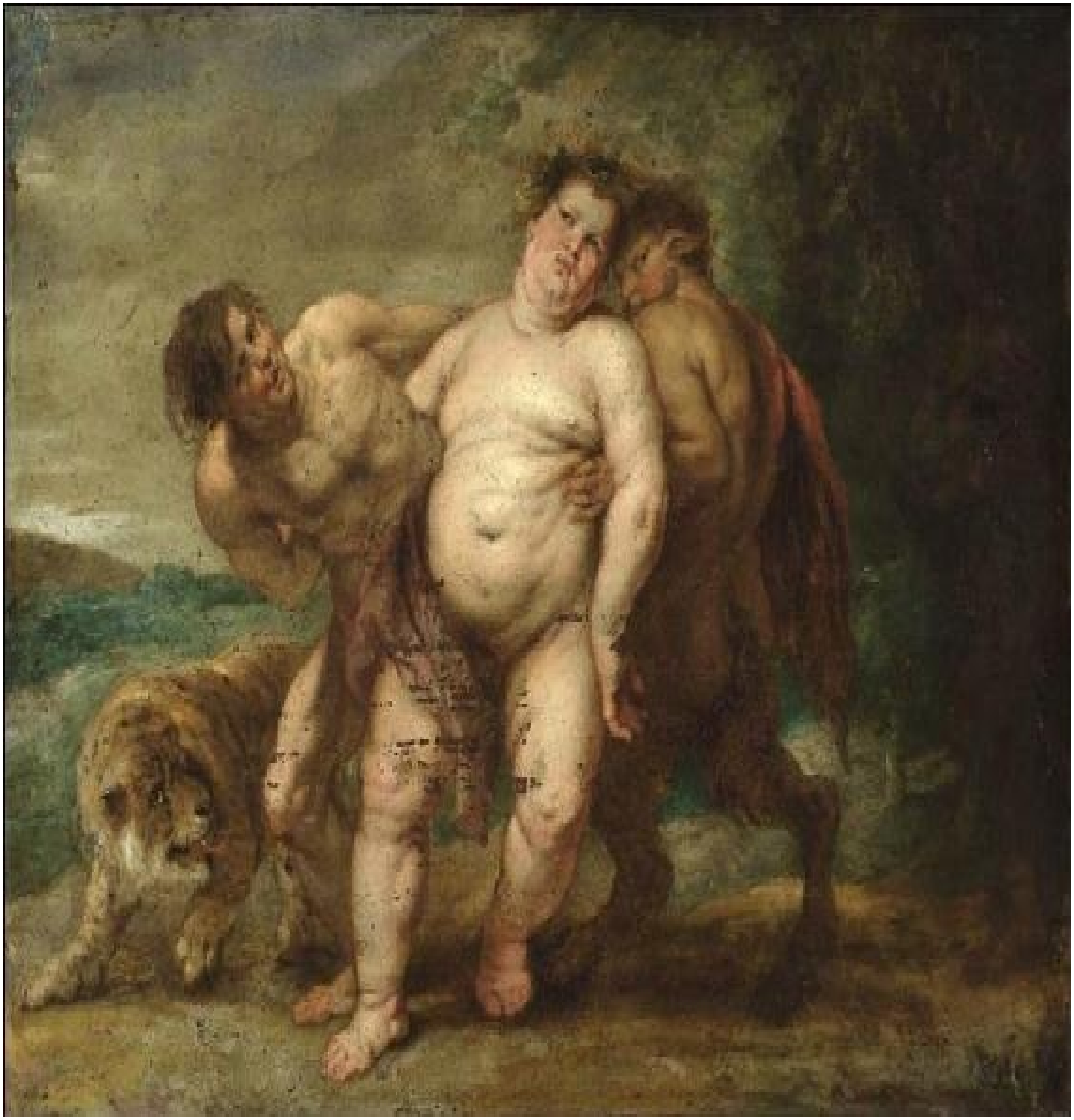
Date unknown



Drunken Bacchus with Faun and Satyr

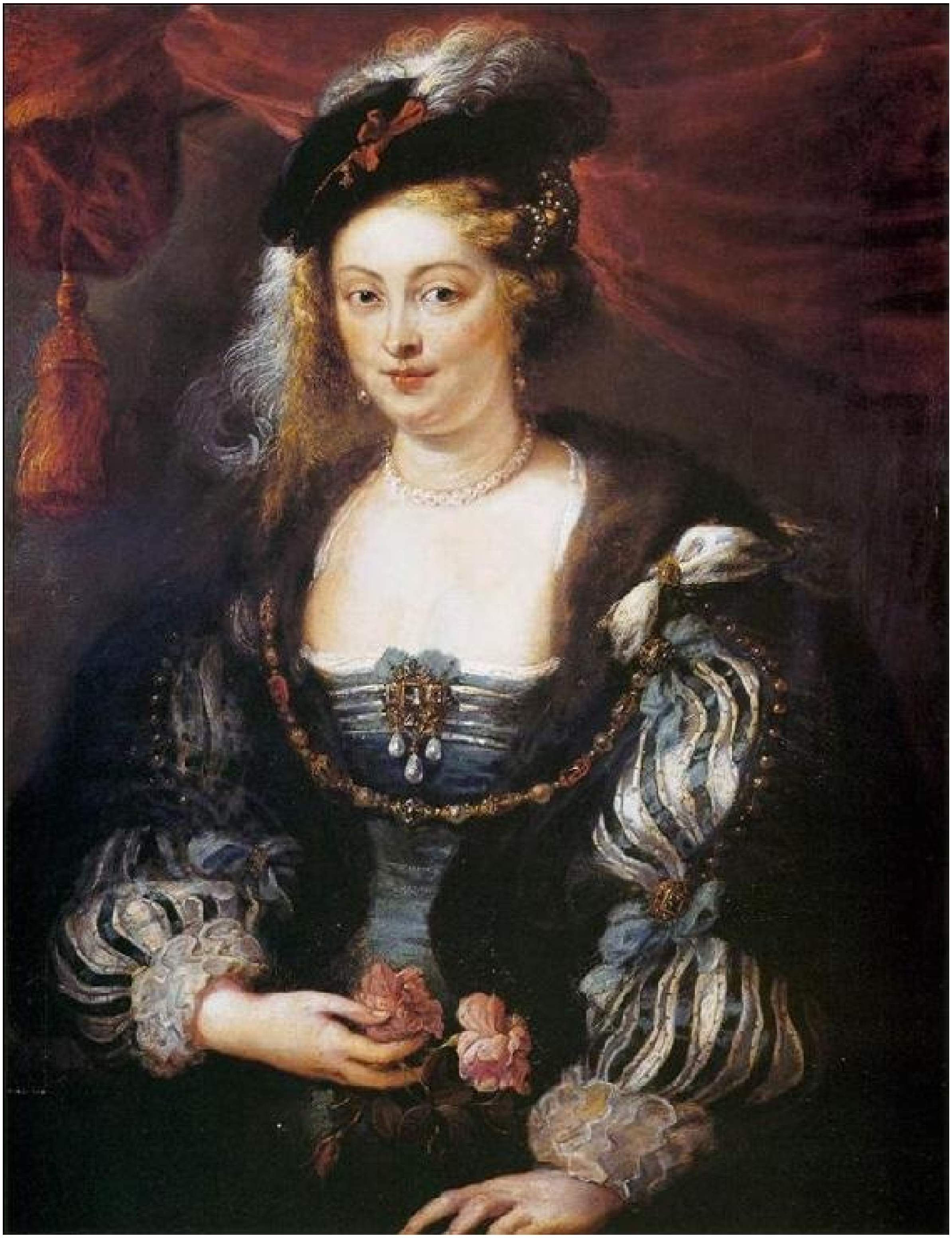
36 x 49 cm

Date unknown



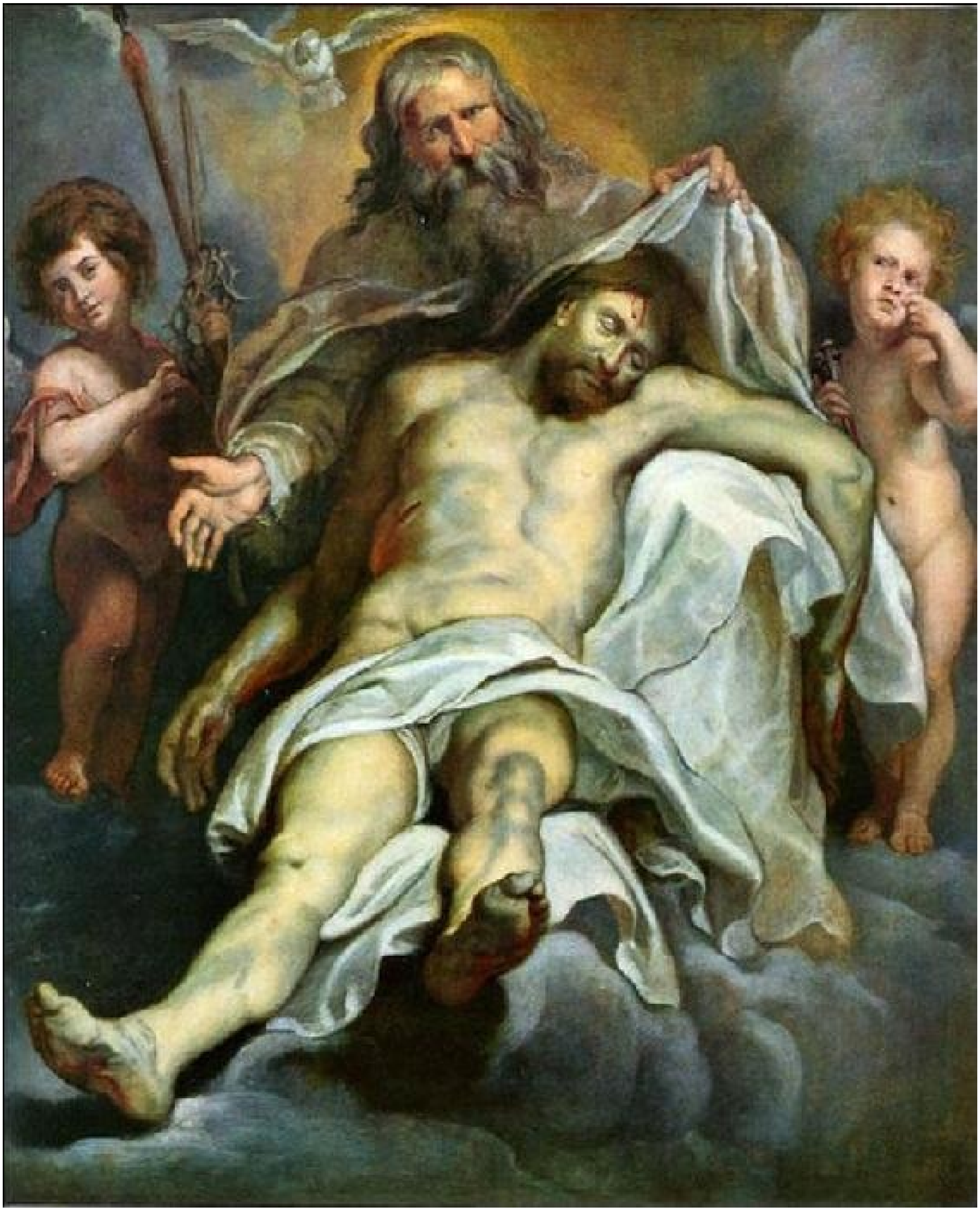
Helena Fourment

96 x 76 cm
Date unknown



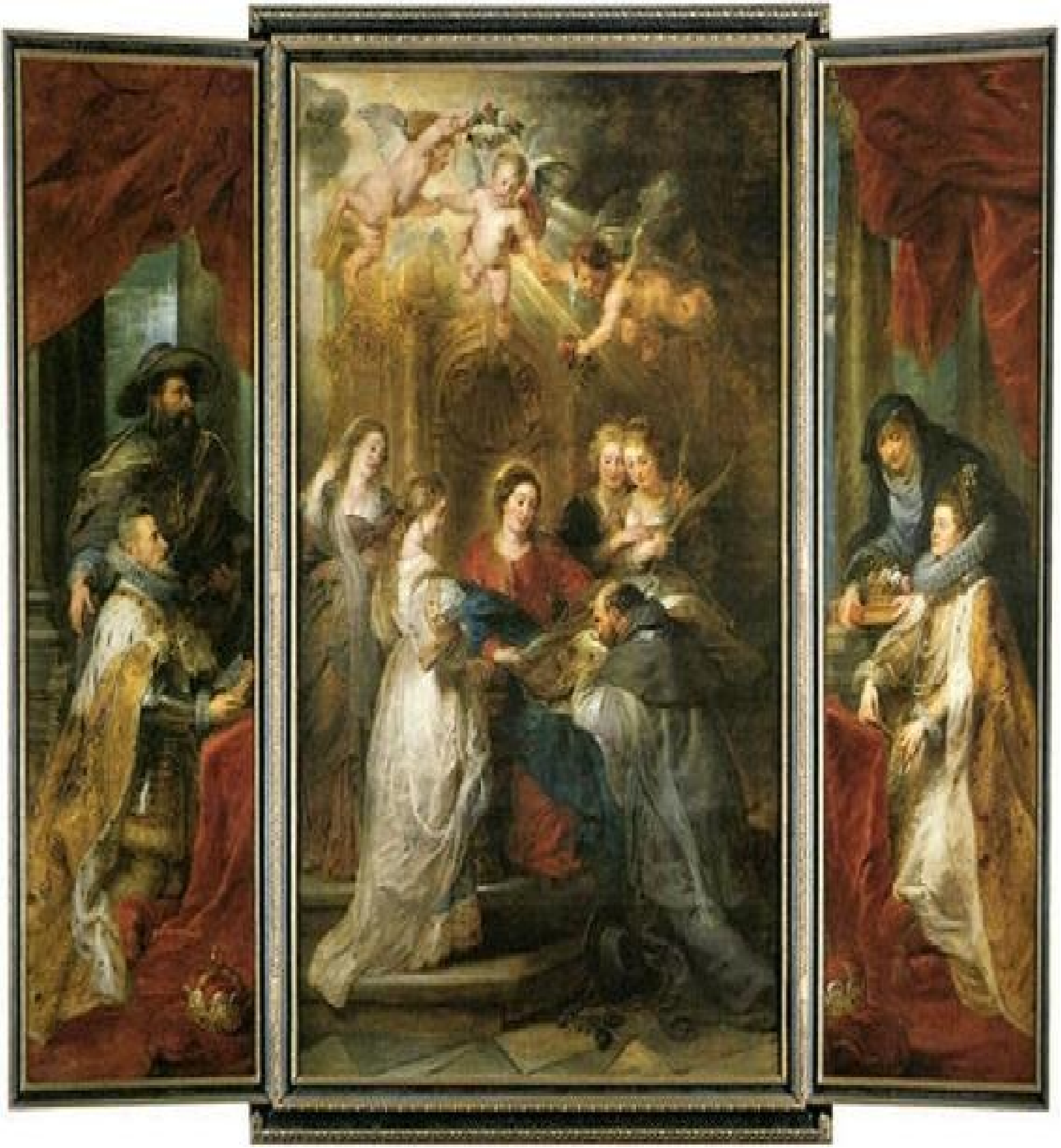
Holy Trinity

Date unknown



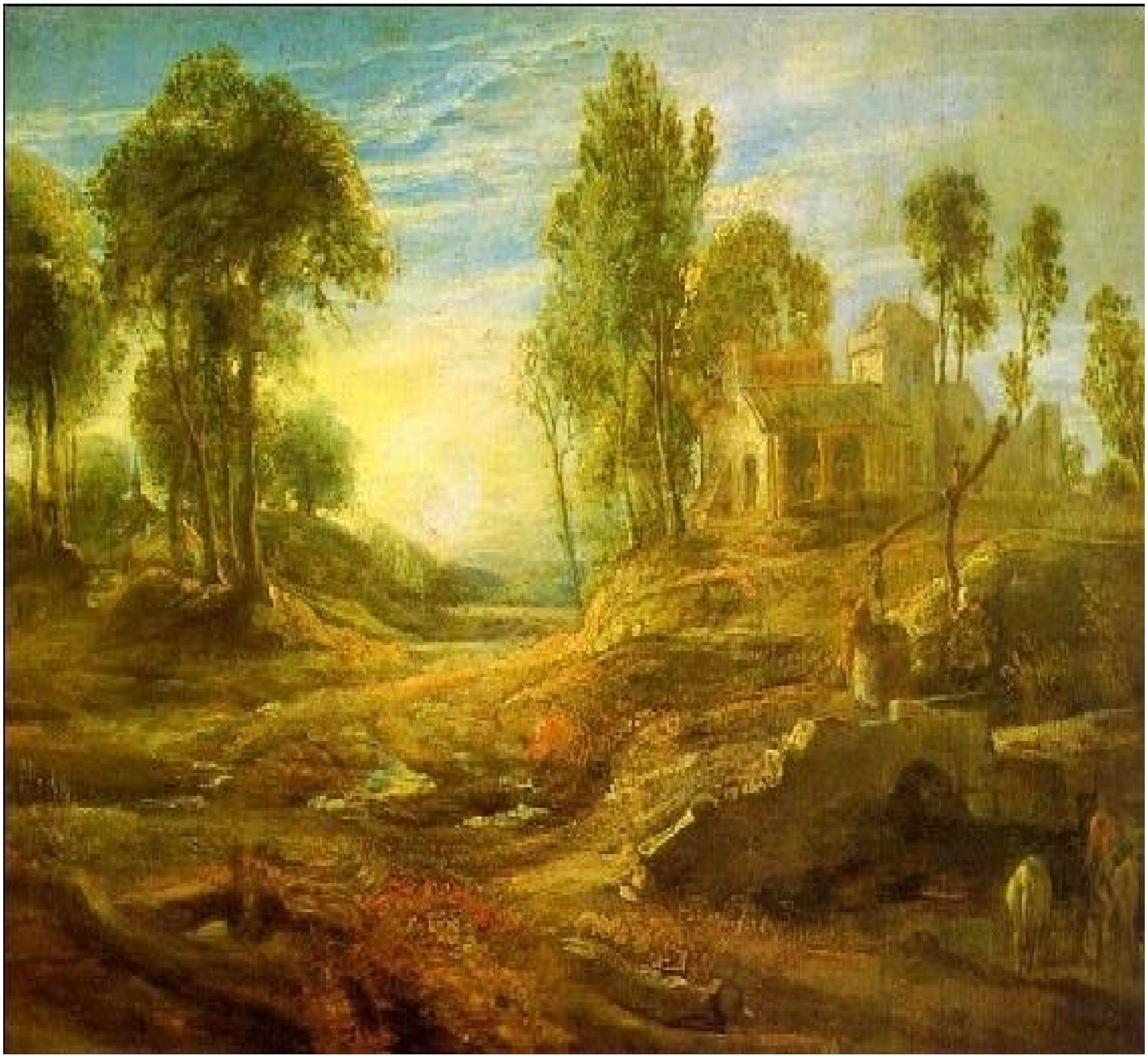
Ildefonso Altar

Date unknown



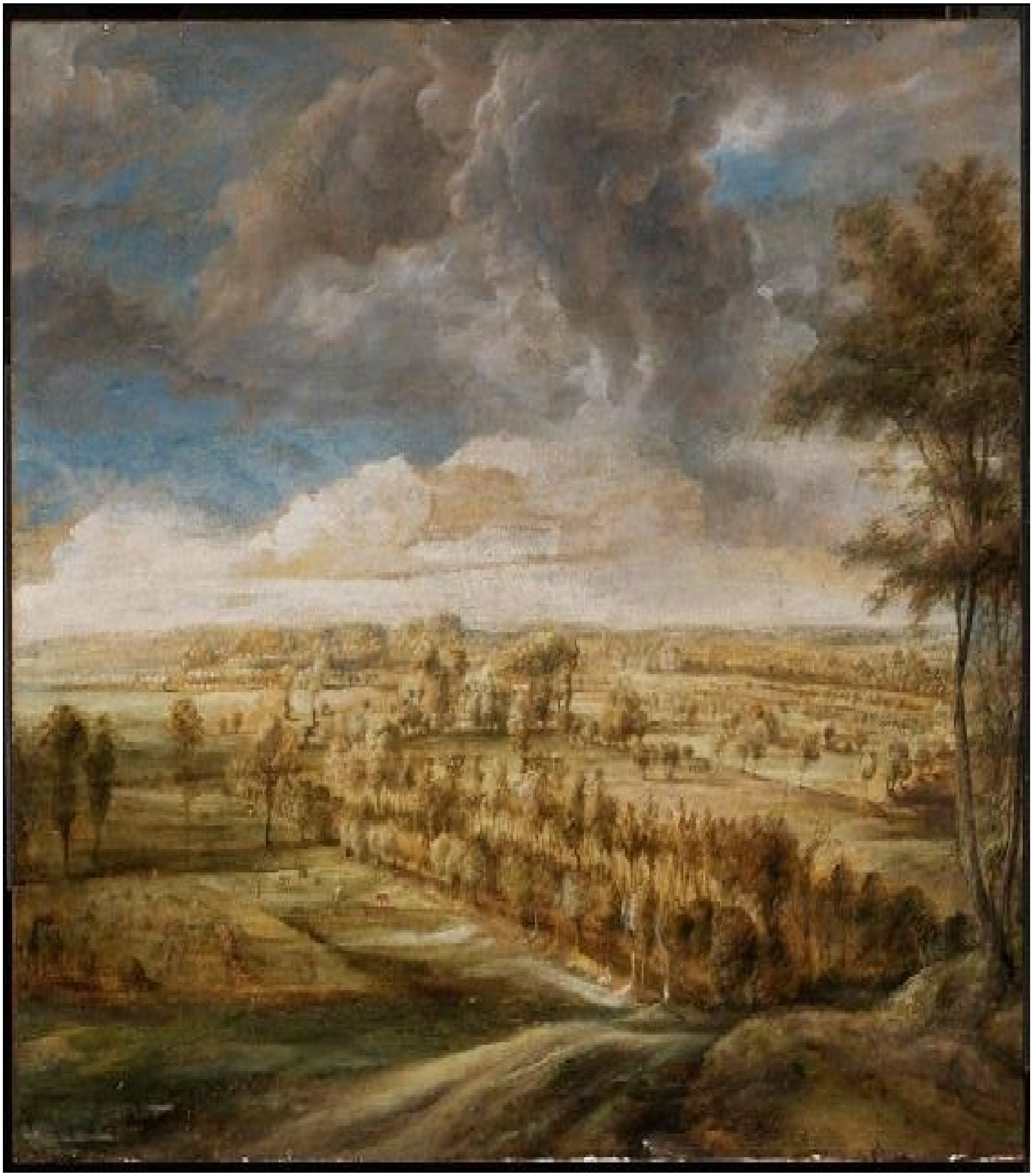
Landscape with a Watering Place

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
Date unknown



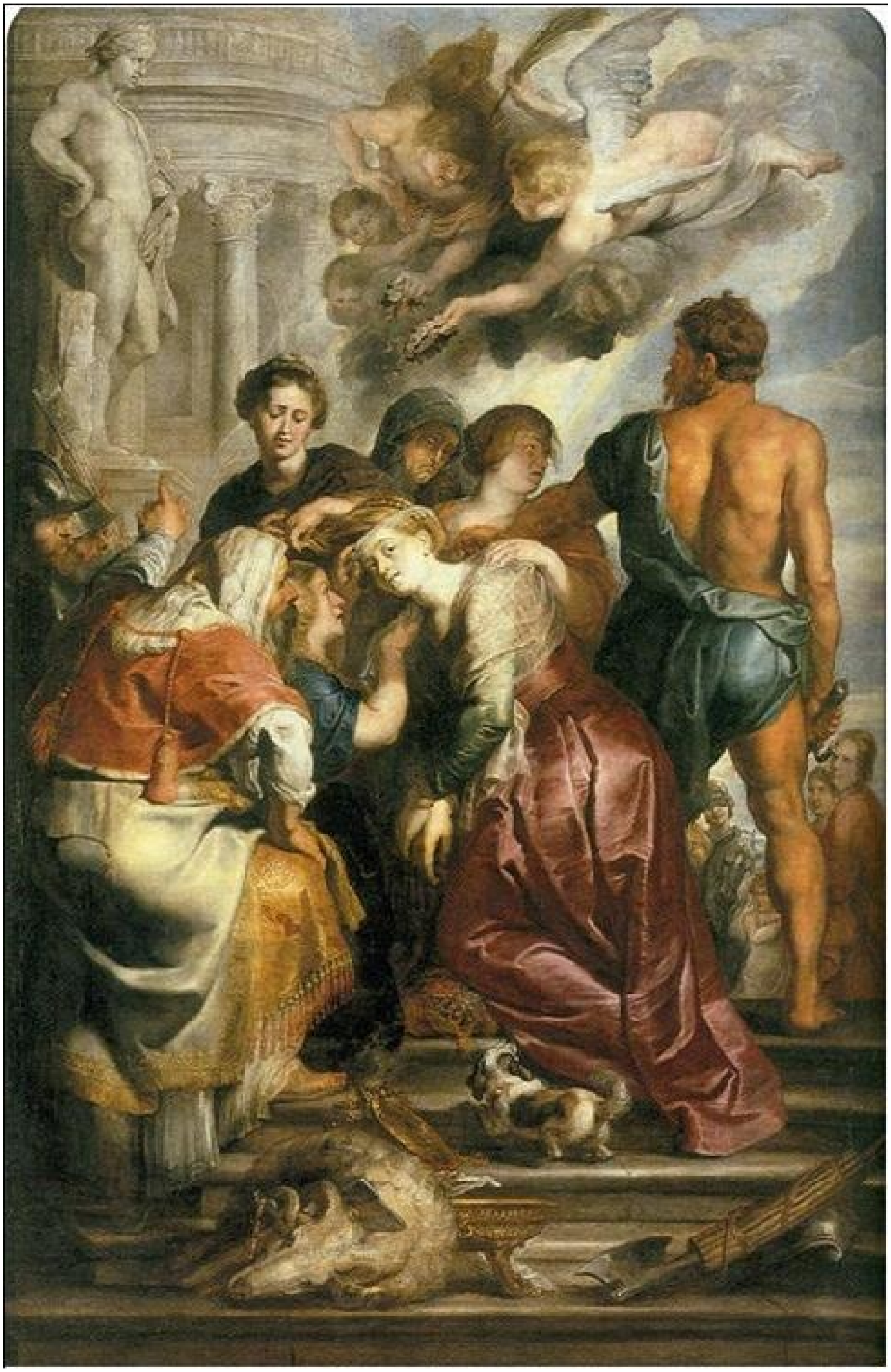
Landscape with an Avenue of Trees

56 x 72 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA
Date unknown



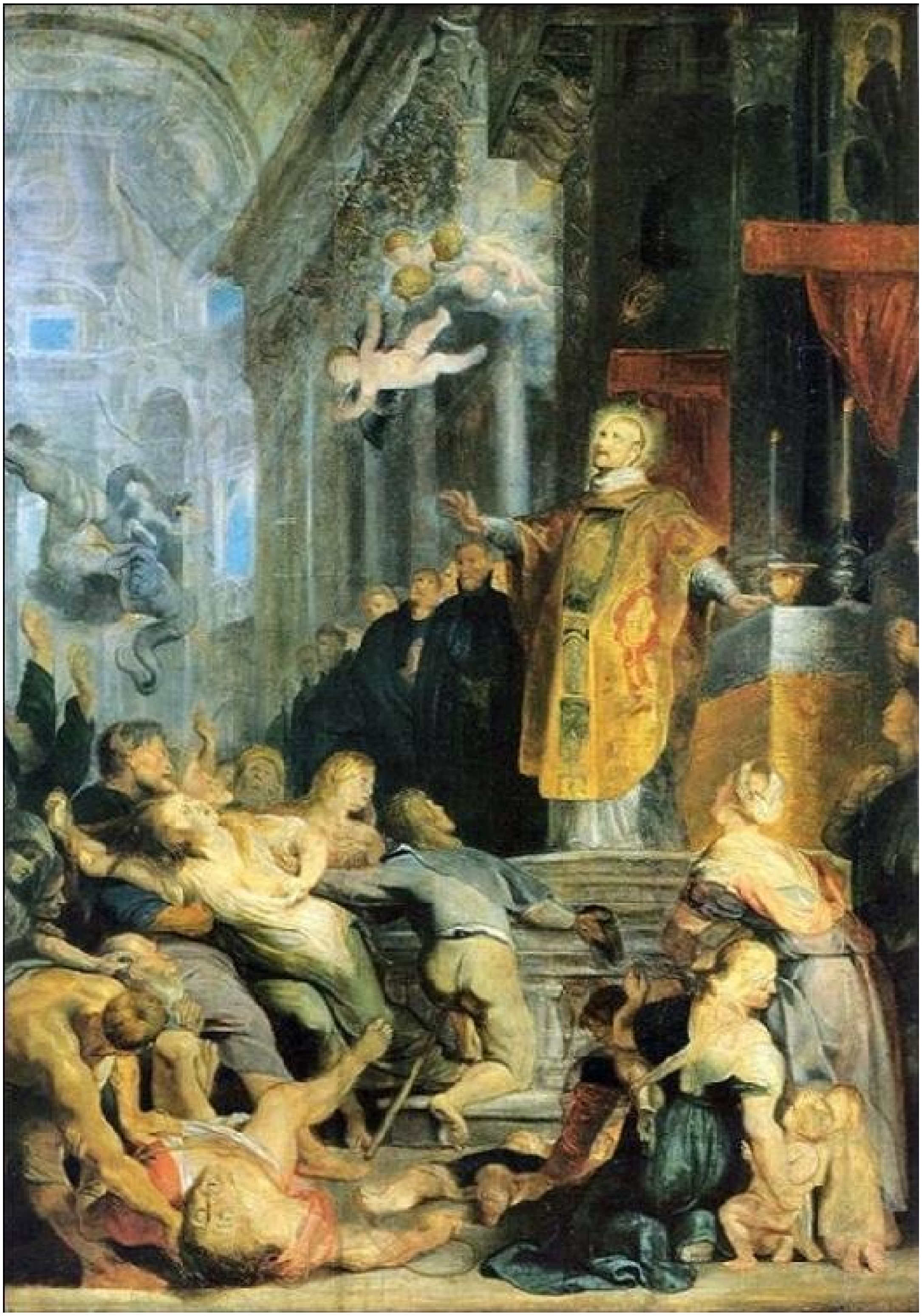
Martyrdom of St. Catherine

Date unknown



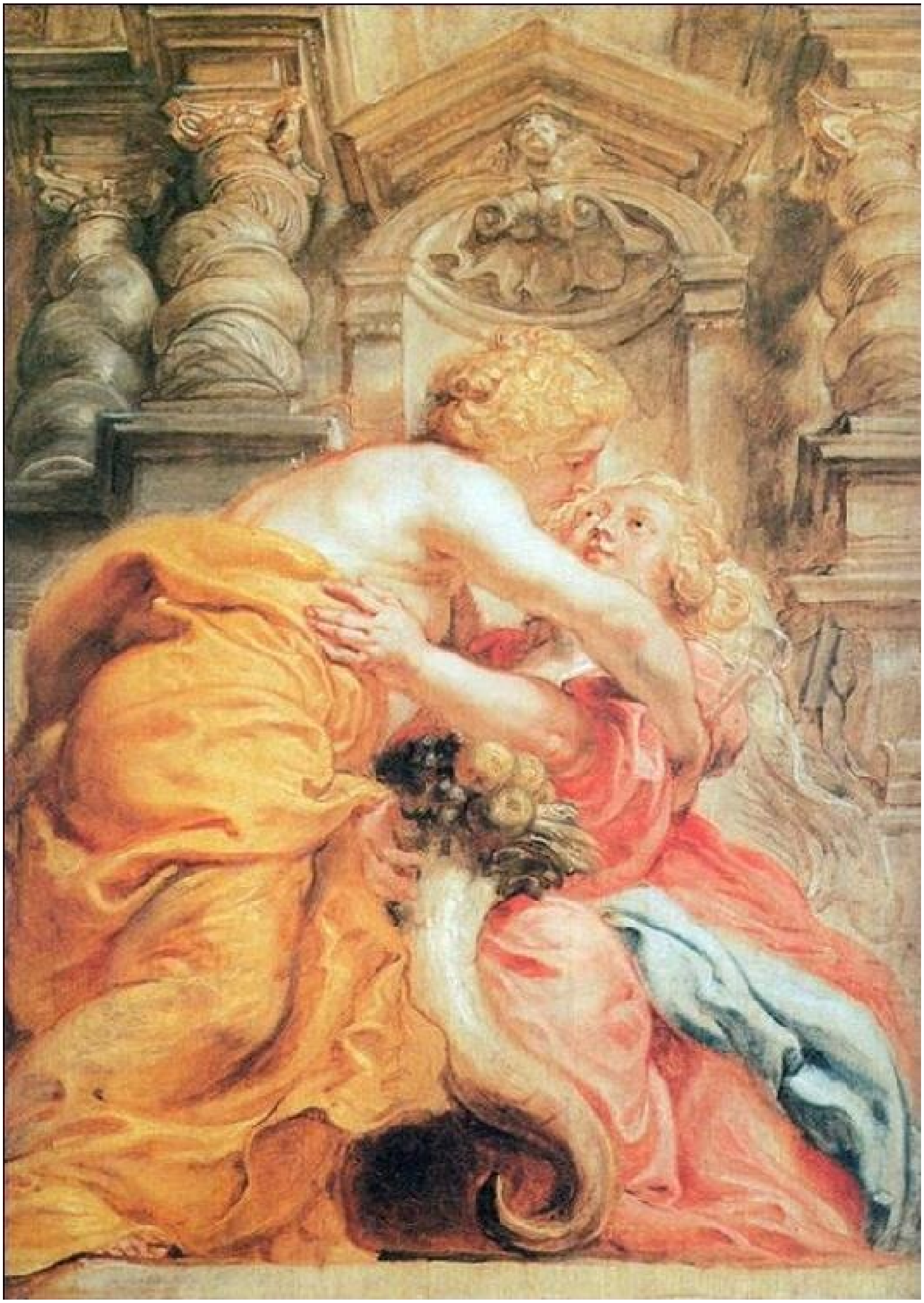
Miracle of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Date unknown



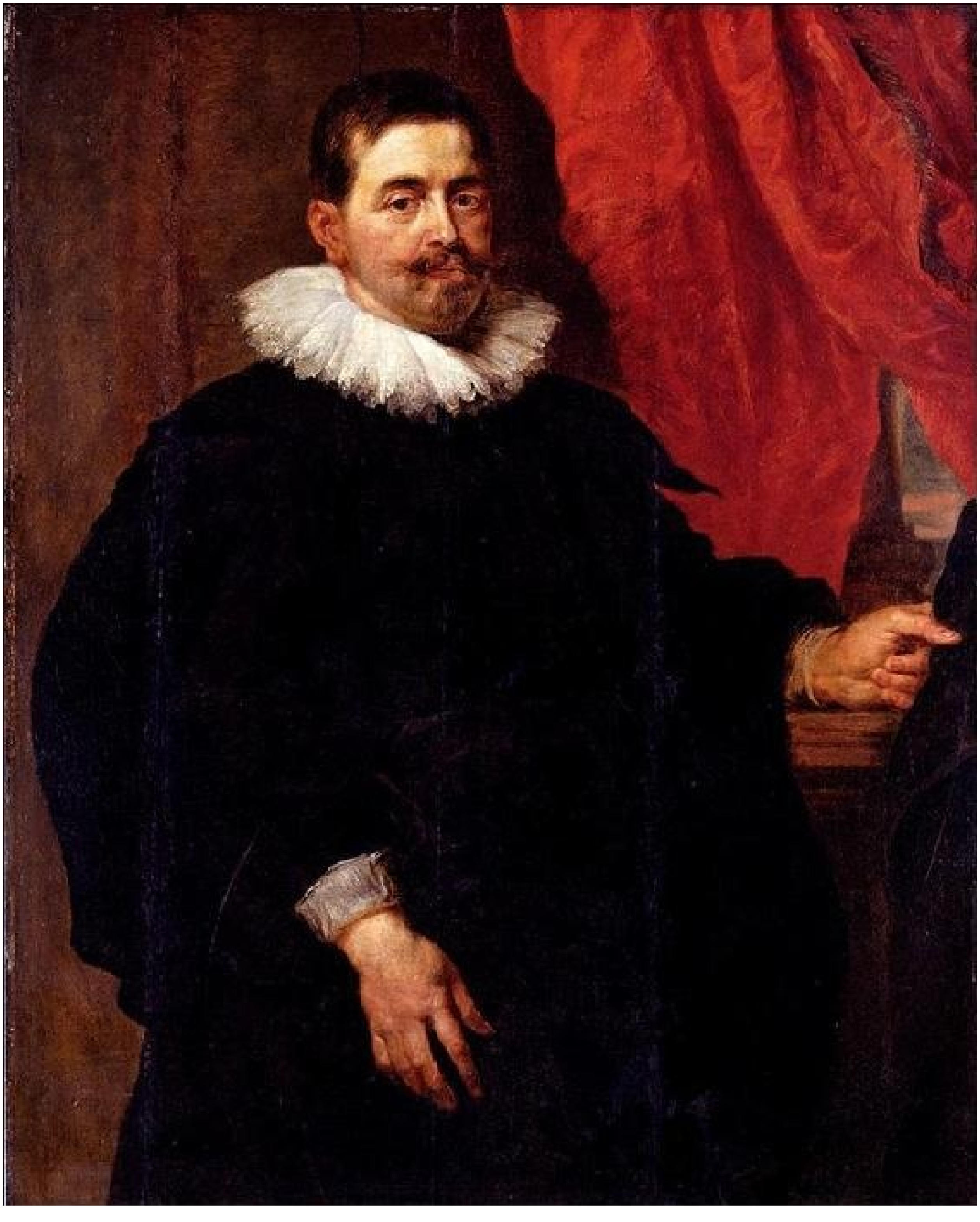
Peace and Abundance

Date unknown



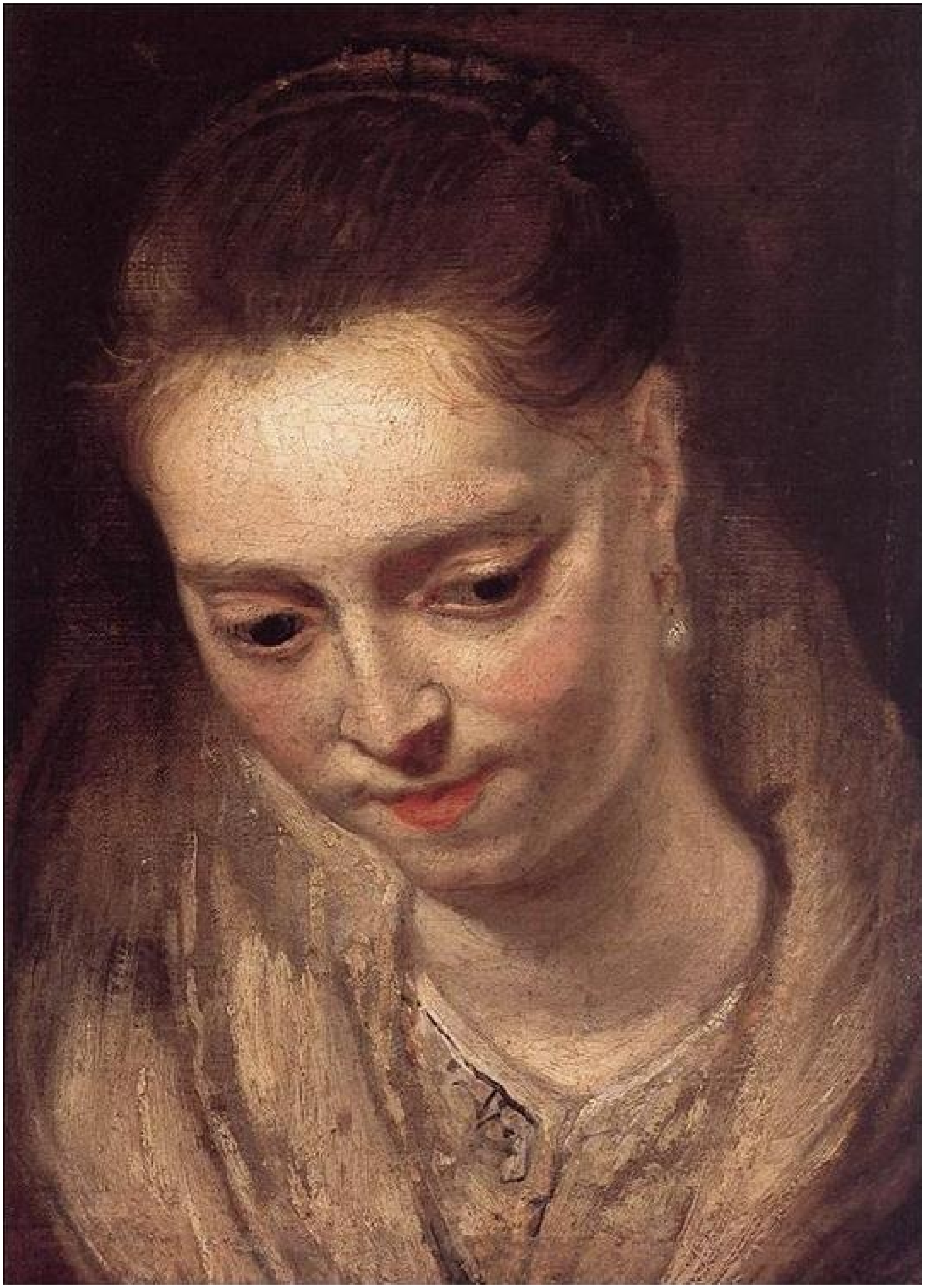
Portrait of a Man, Probably Peter Van Hecke

90.2 x 114.9 cm
Private Collection
Date unknown



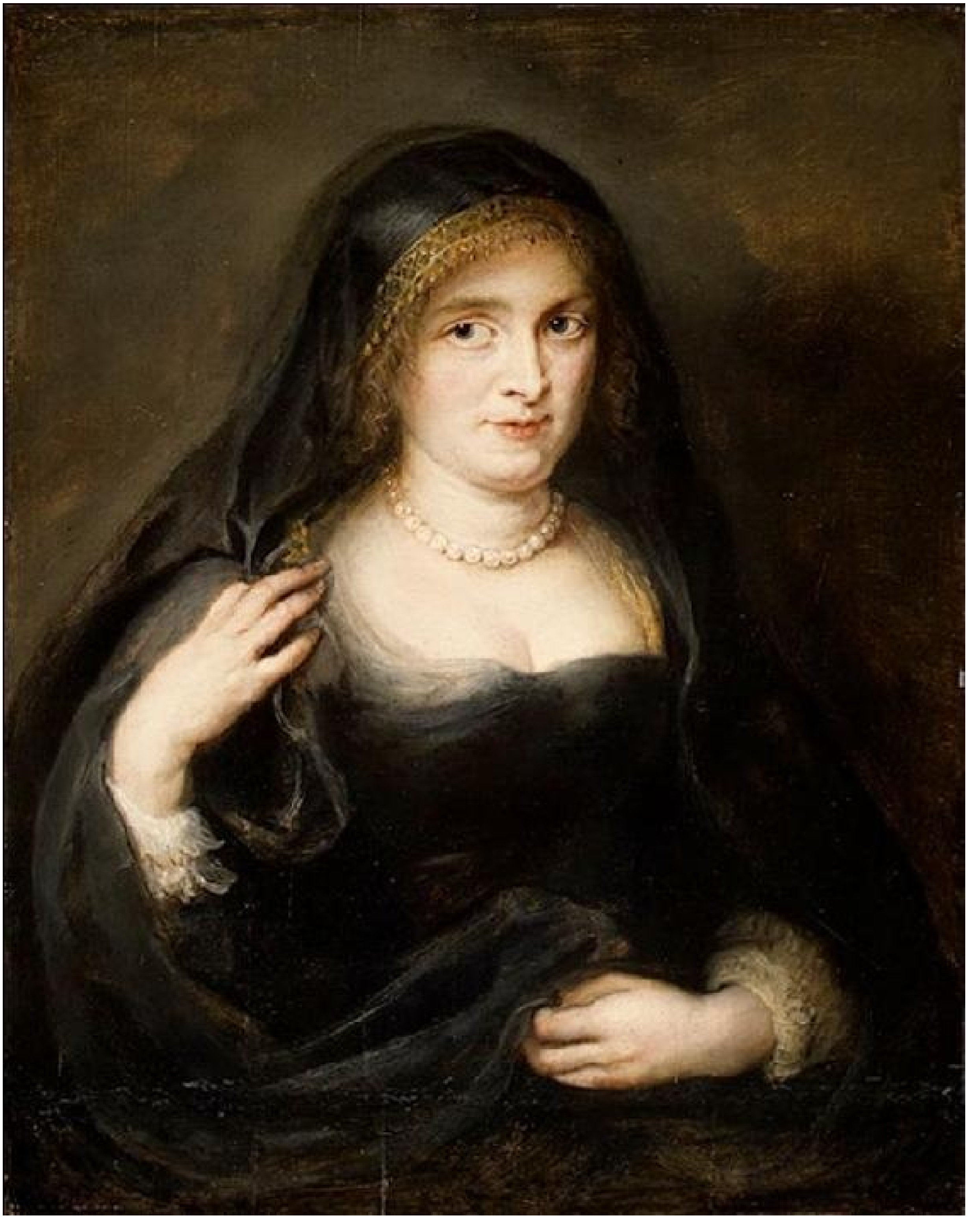
Portrait of a Woman

Date unknown



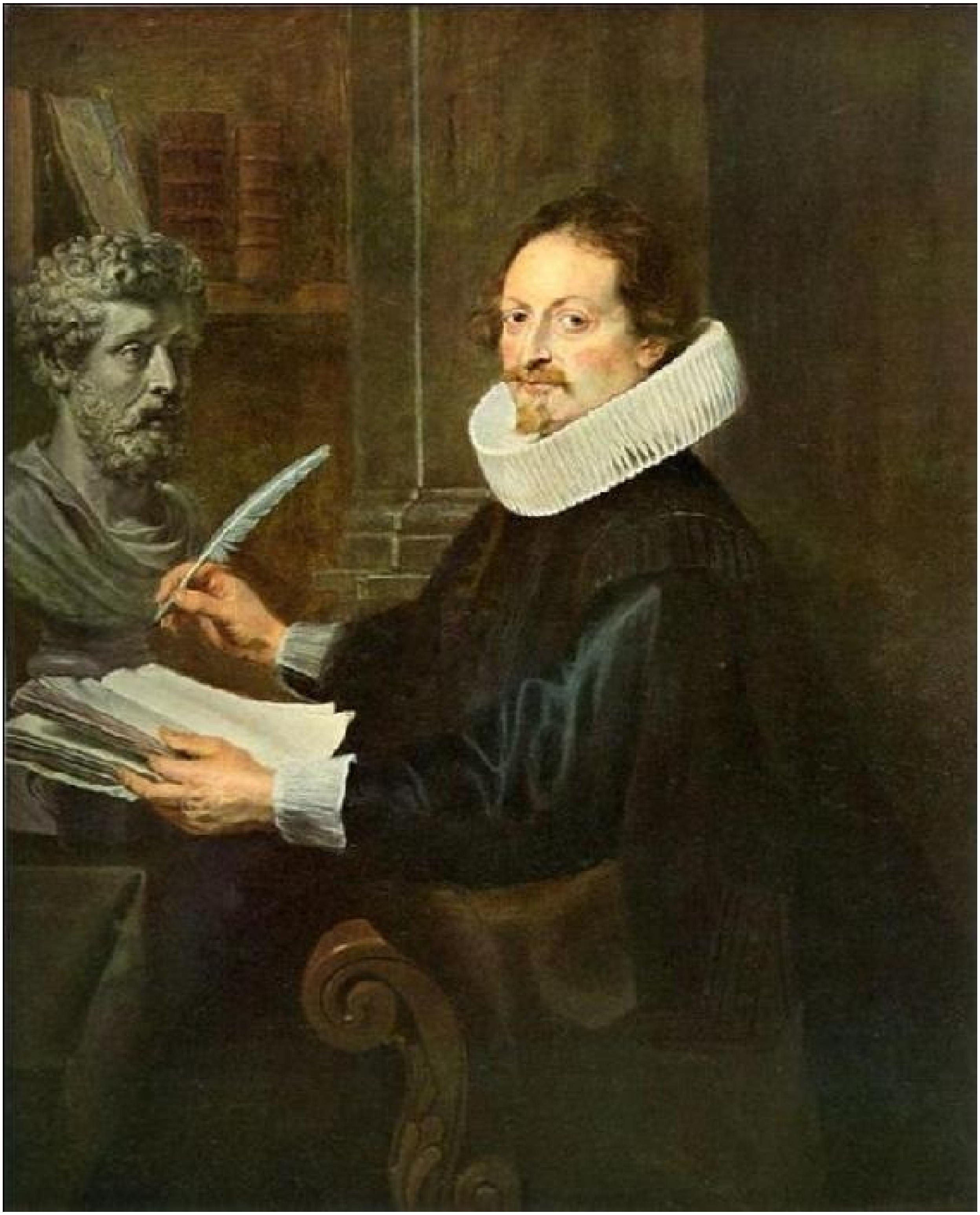
Portrait of a Woman, Probably Susanna Lunden

77 x 60 cm
Date unknown



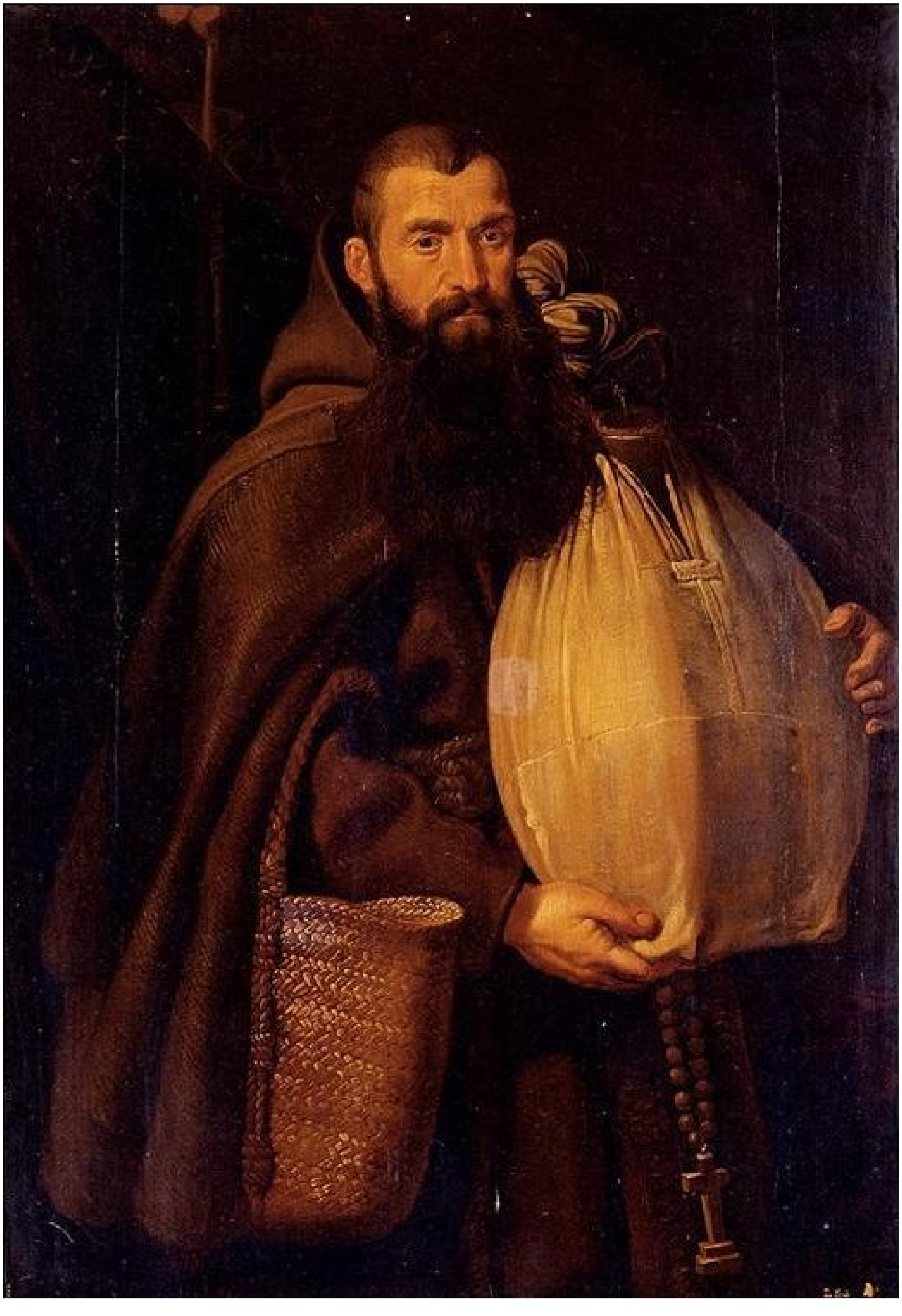
Portrait of Haspar Hevarts

Date unknown



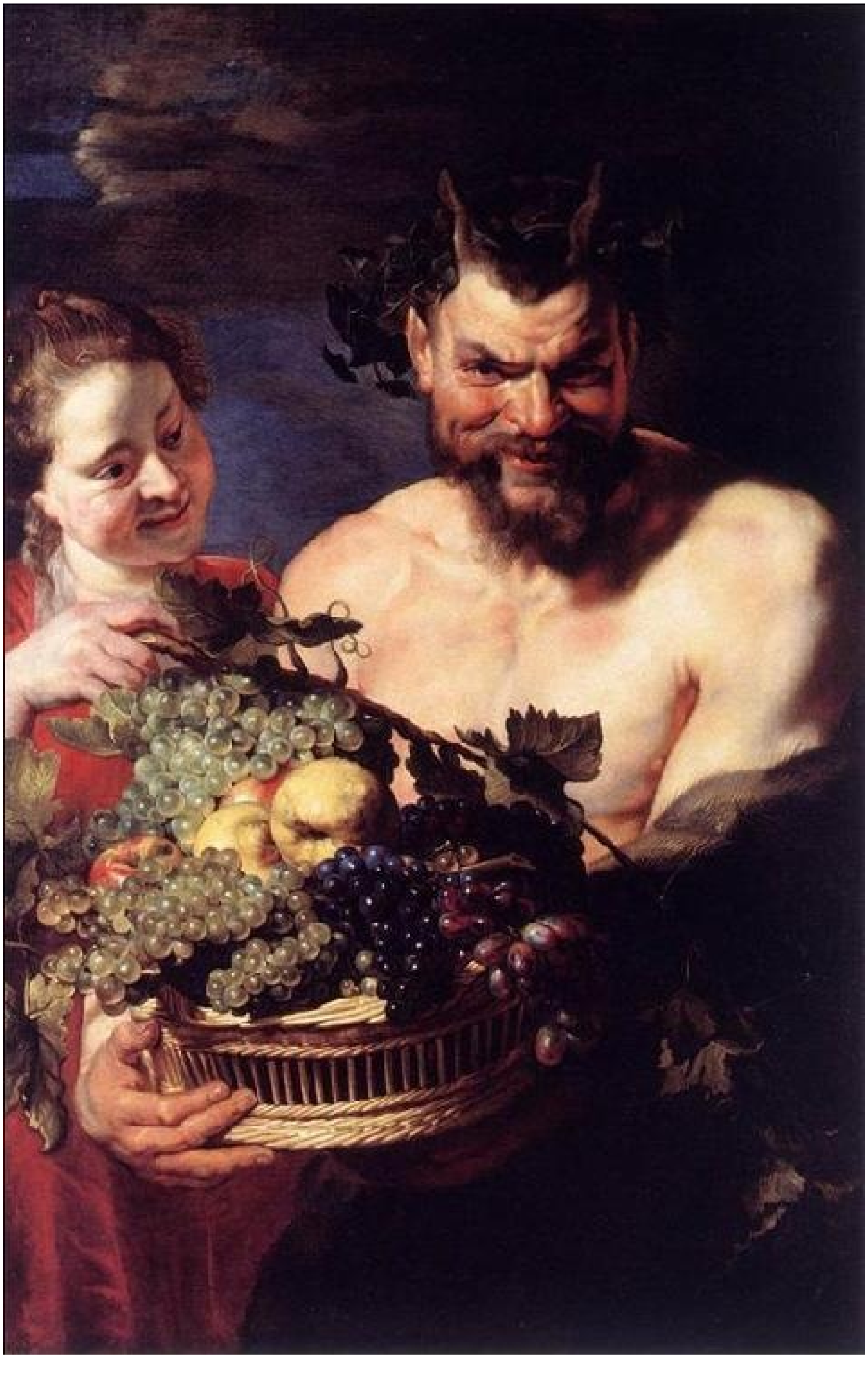
Saint Felix Of Cantalice

105 x 72 cm
Private Collection
Date unknown



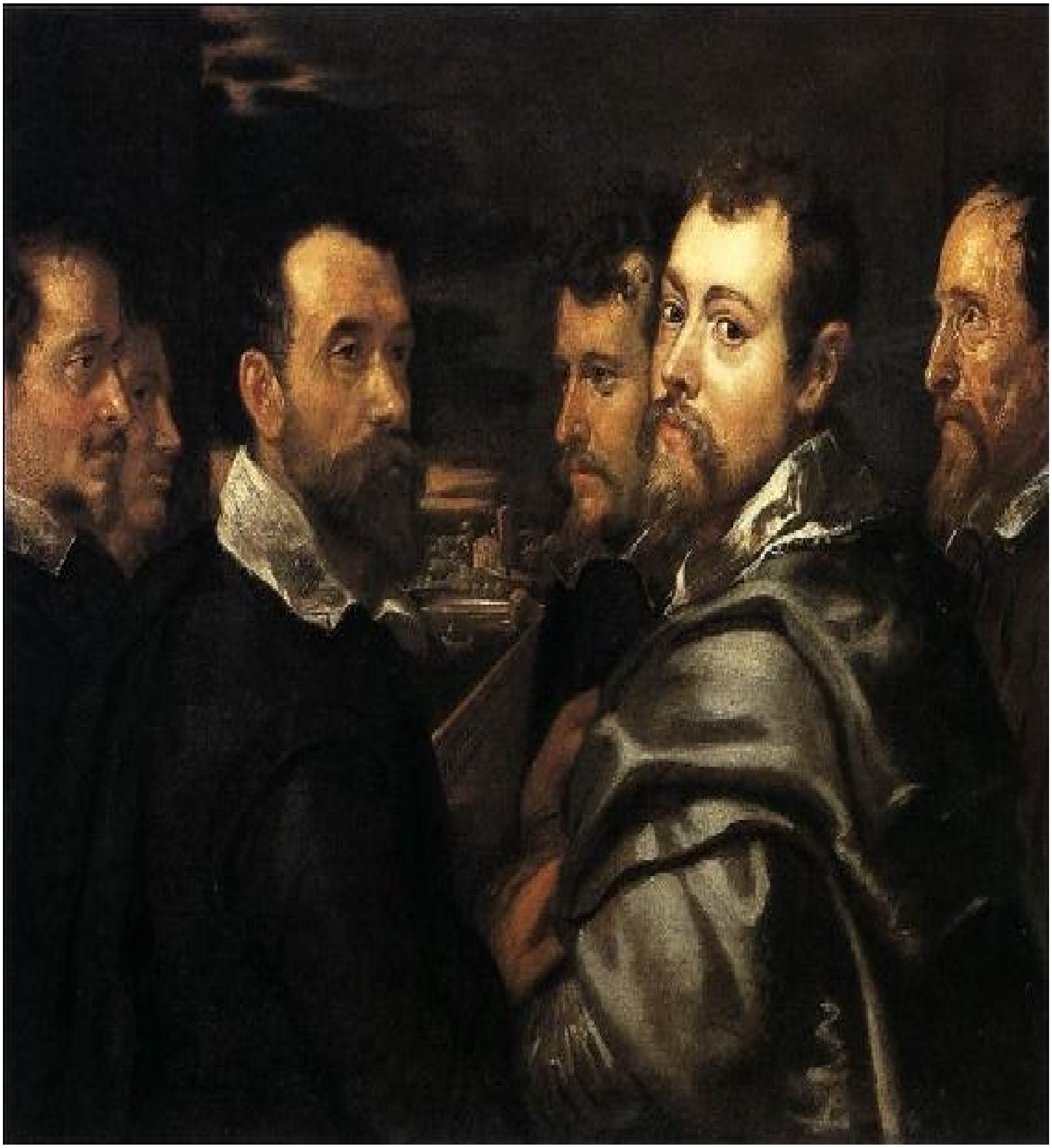
Satyr and Girl

113 x 71 cm
Residenzgalerie, Salzburg, Austria
Date unknown



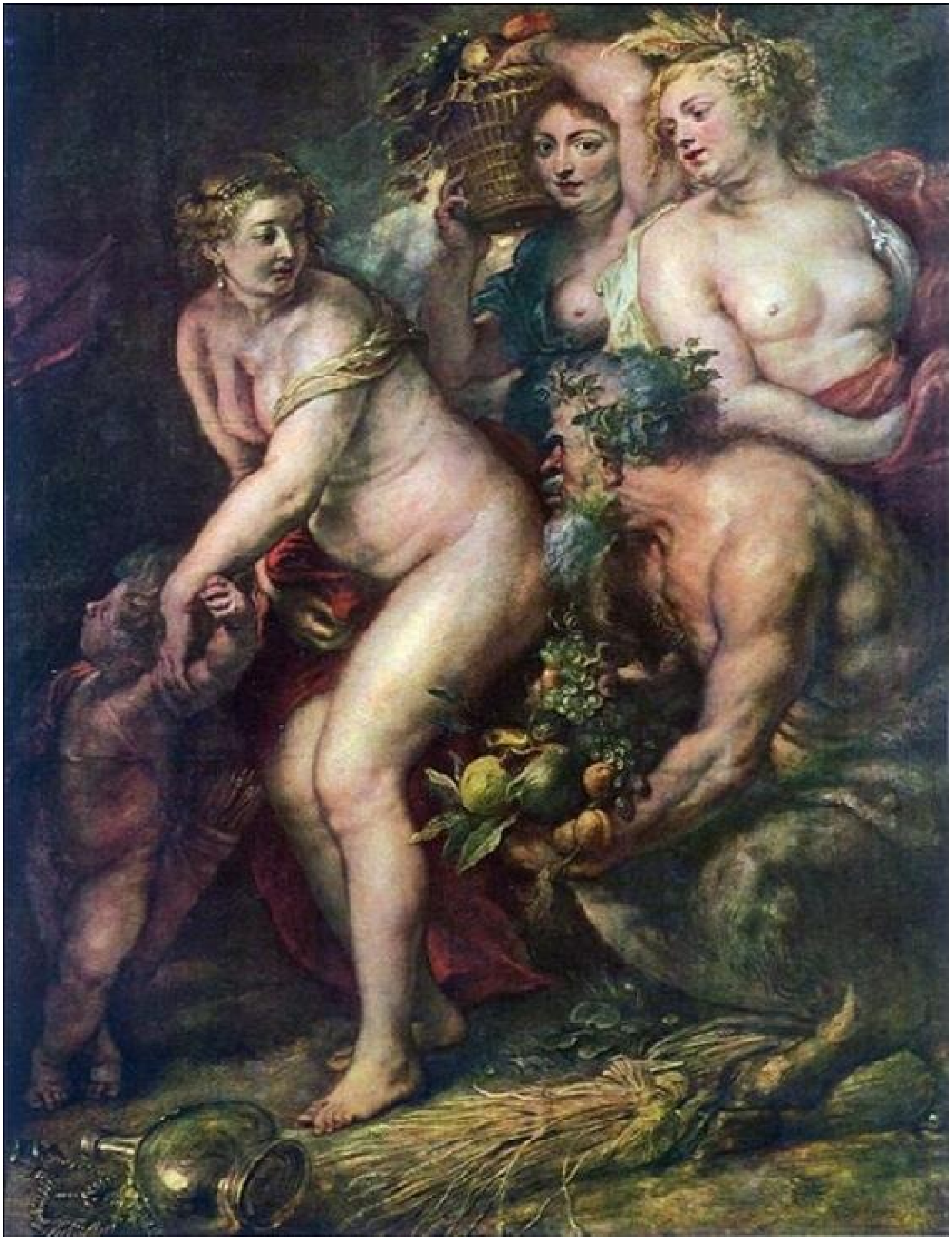
Self-Portrait in a Circle of Friends from Mantua

78 x 101 cm
Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, Germany
Date unknown



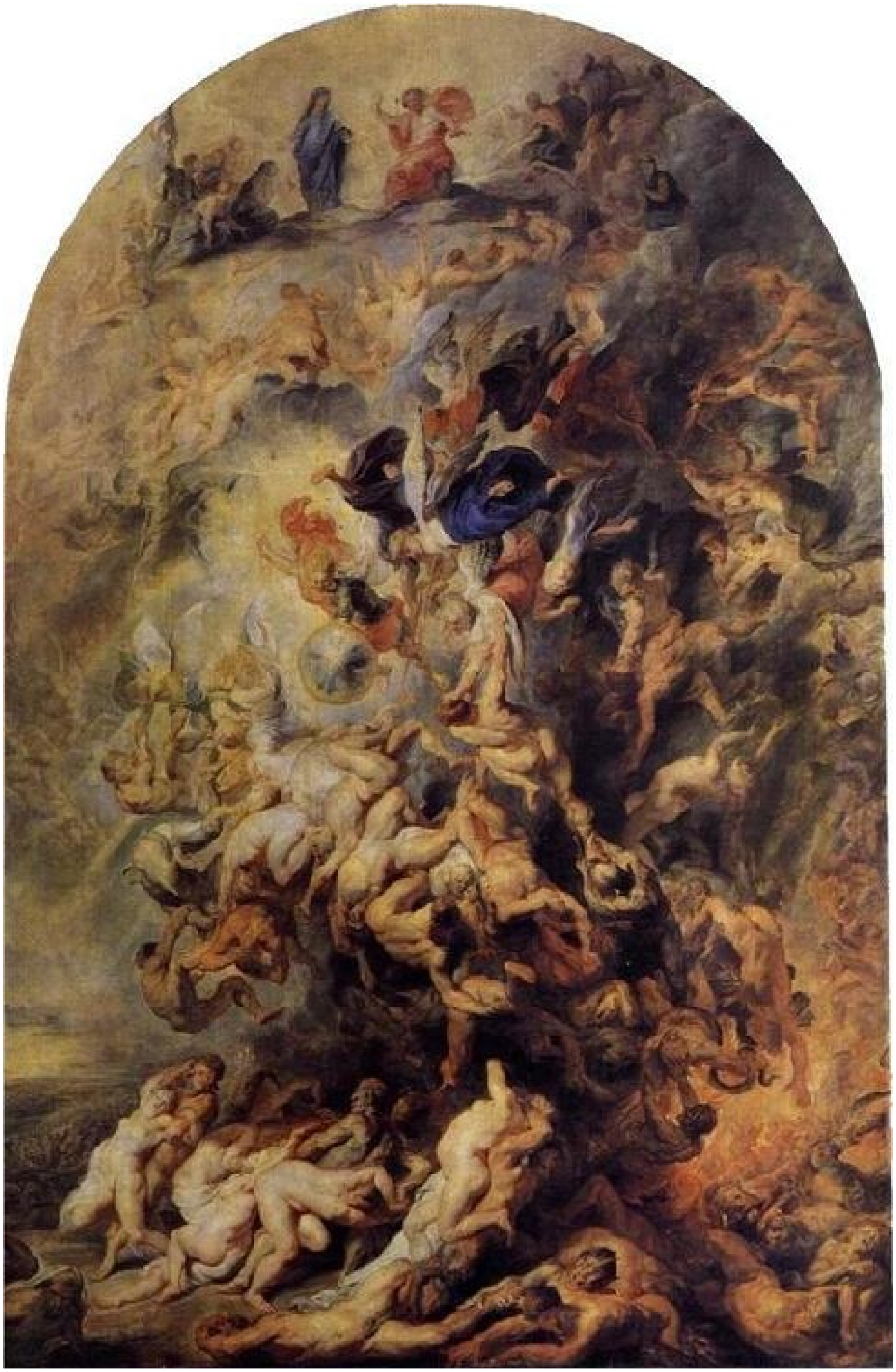
Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus

Date unknown



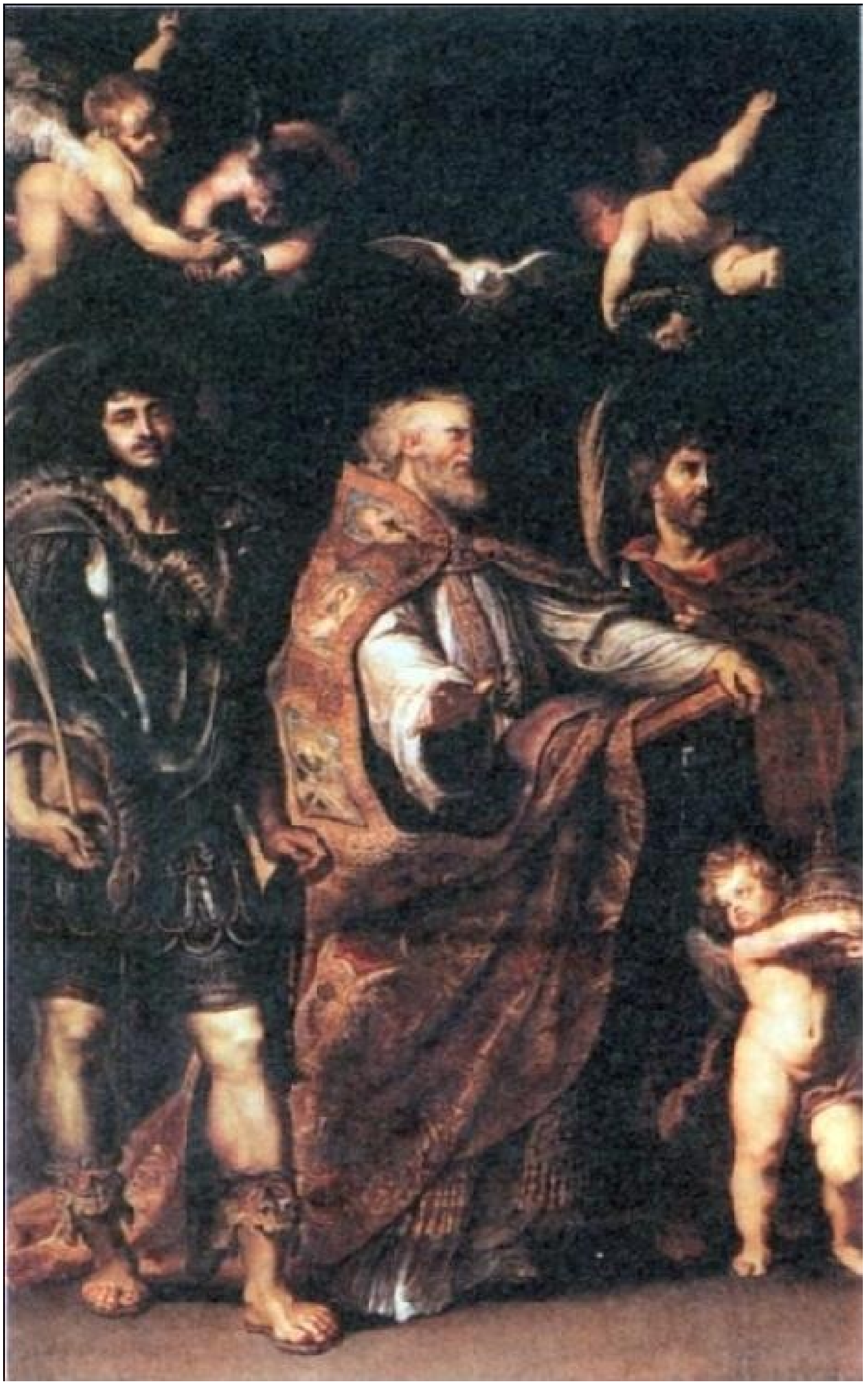
Small Last Judgement

183.3 x 119 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany
Date unknown



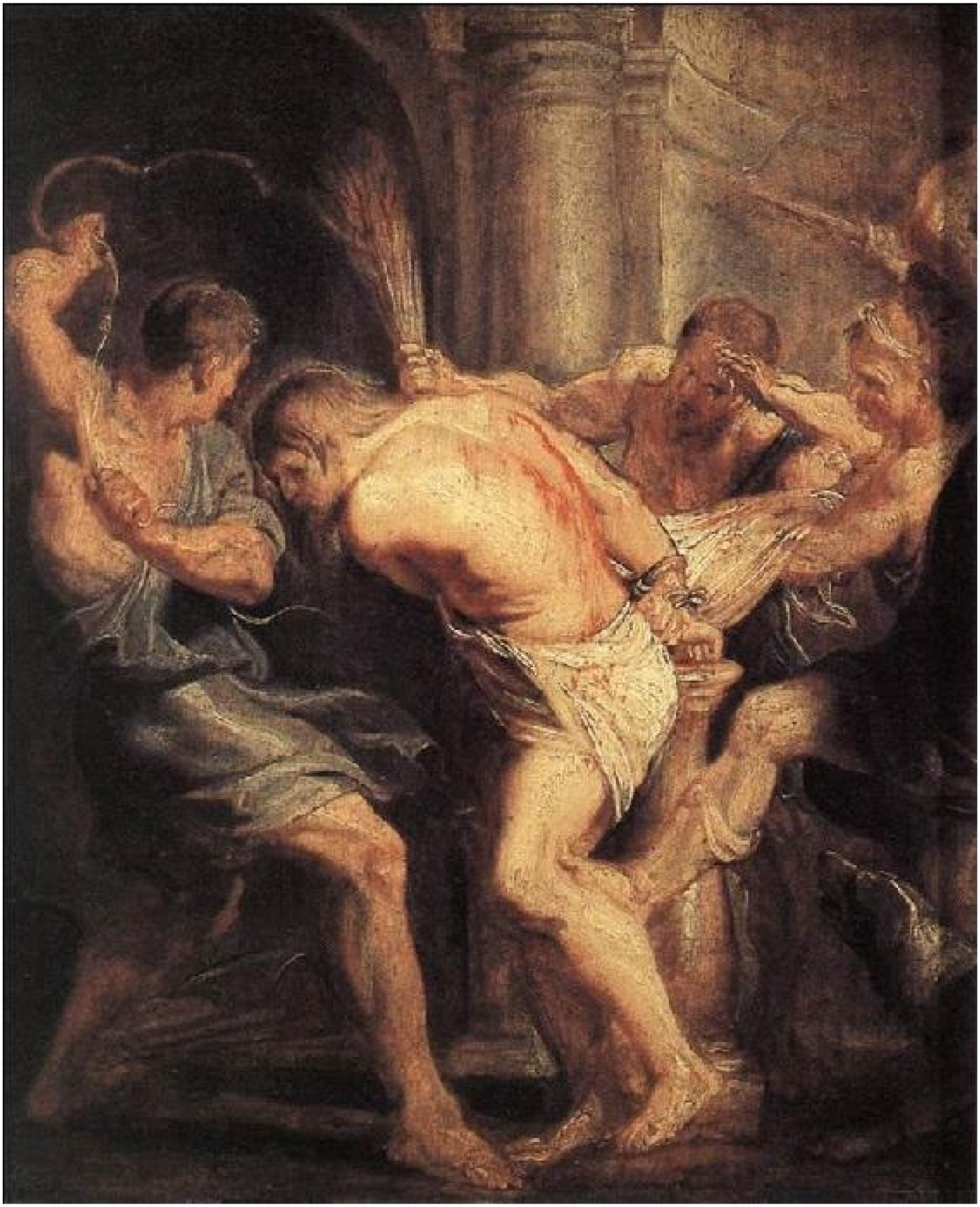
St. George with St. Maurus and Papianus

Date unknown



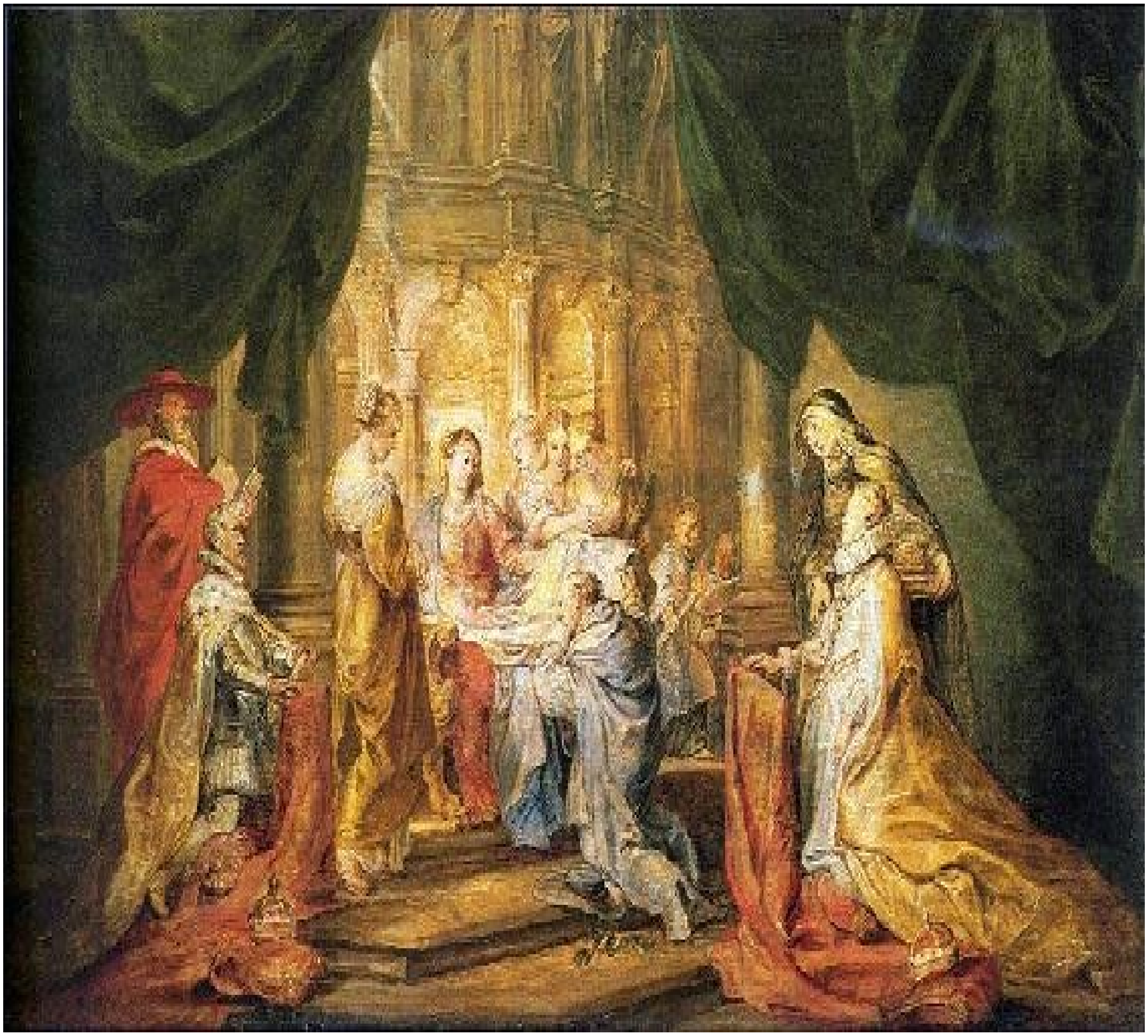
The Flagellation of Christ

37.4 x 35.1 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten
Date unknown



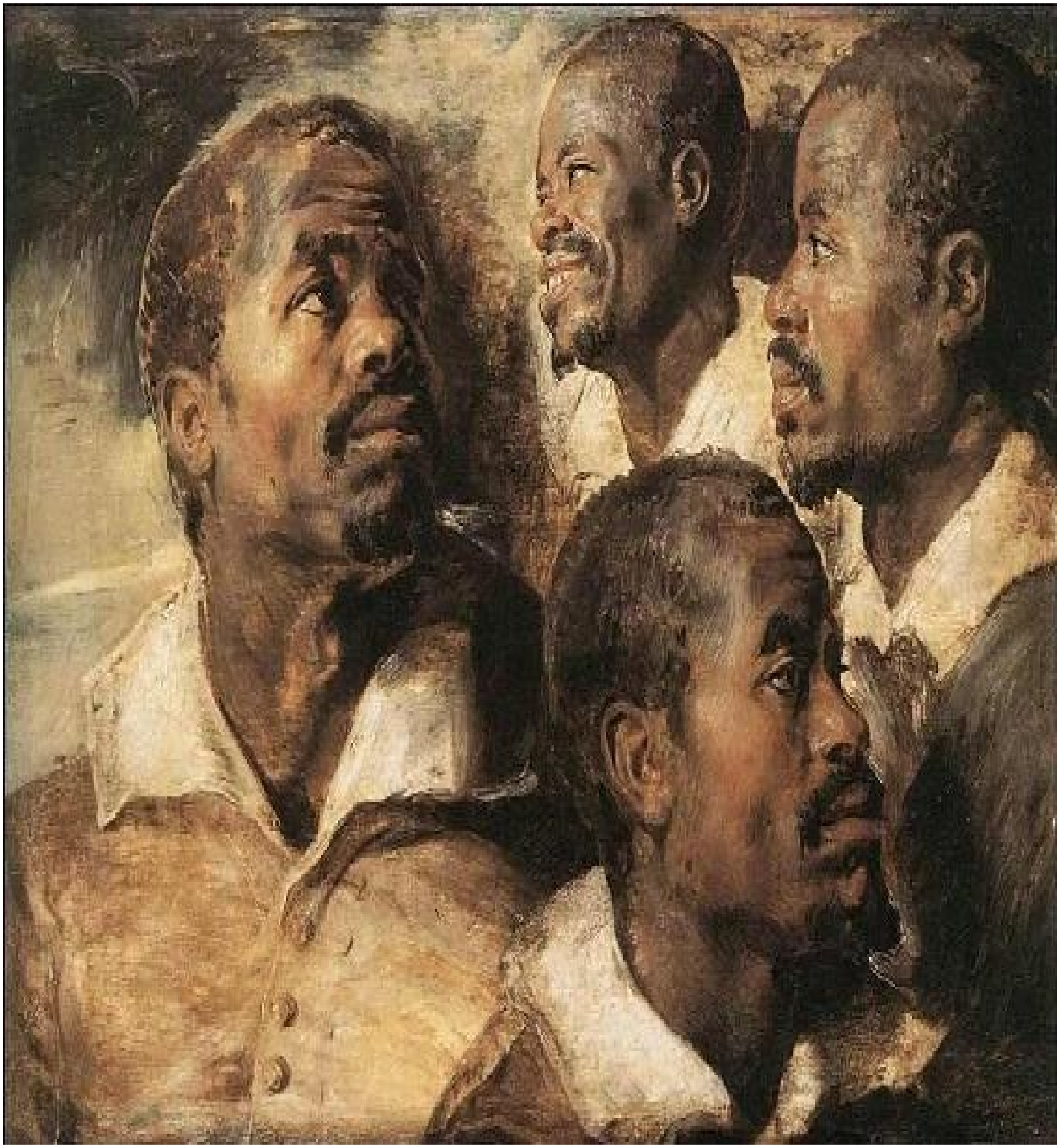
St. Ildefonso Receiving a Priest Cloak

Date unknown



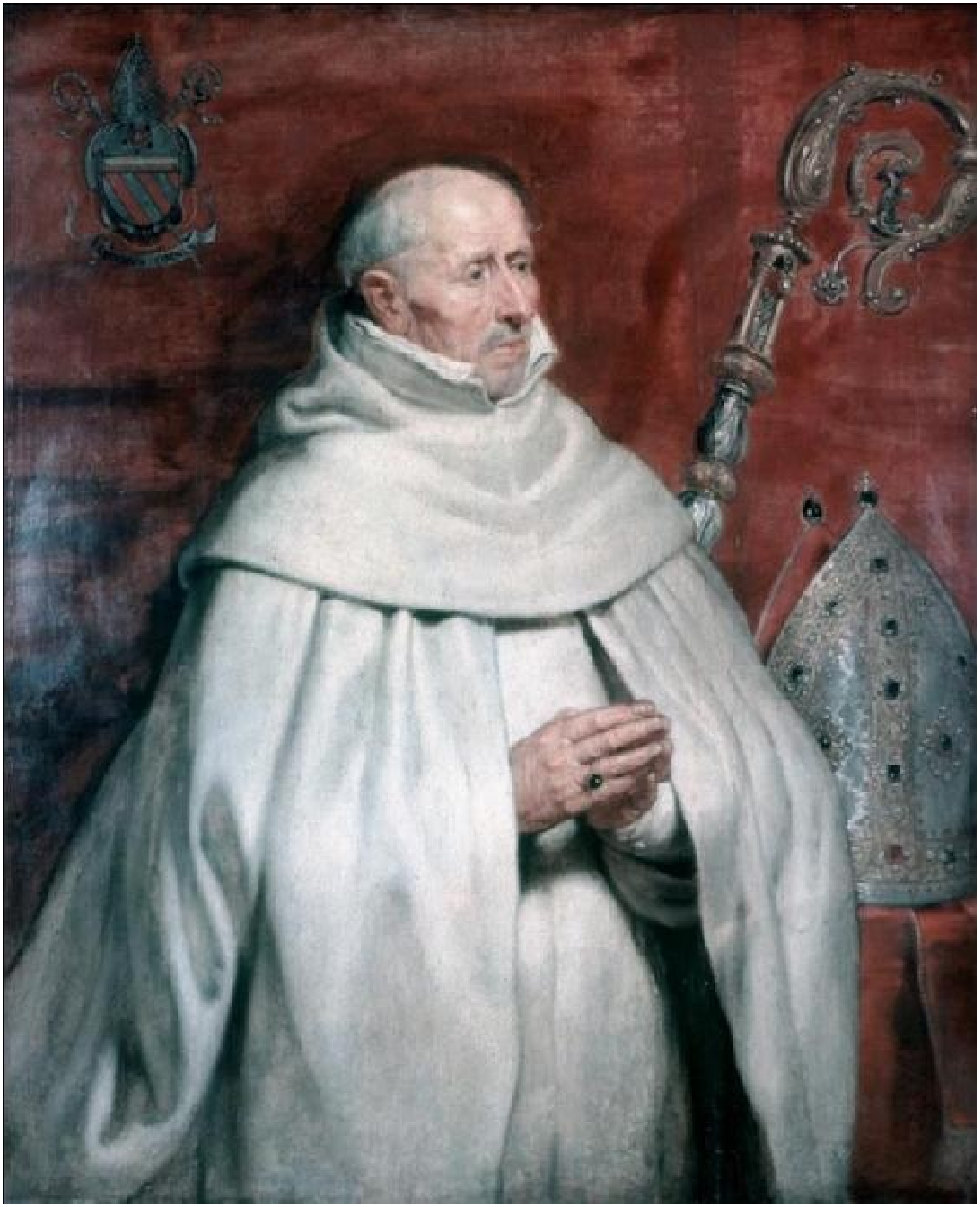
Studies of the Head of a Negro

Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium
Date unknown



The Abbot of St. Michael’s

120 x 103 cm
Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark
Date unknown



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DESCENT FROM THE CROSS
DESCENT FROM THE CROSS
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DESCENT FROM THE CROSS (OUTSIDE RIGHT)
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DIANA PRESENTIG THE CATCH TO PAN

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LAMENTATION OF CHRIST

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MIRACLE OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA
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PORTRAIT OF A MAN
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PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN, PROBABLY SUSANNA LUNDEN
PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL
PORTRAIT OF AMBROGIO SPINOLA
PORTRAIT OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA
PORTRAIT OF ARCHDUCHESS ISABELLA CLARA EUGENIA
PORTRAIT OF CLARA SERENA RUBENS
PORTRAIT OF GASPARD SCHOPPINS
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PORTRAIT OF HASPAR HEVARTS
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PORTRAIT OF LADY ARUNDEL WITH HER TRAIN
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SAINT PETER
SAMSON AND DELILAH
SATYR AND GIRL
SELFPORTRAIT
SELFPORTRAIT
SELFPORTRAIT
SELFPORTRAIT
SELFPORTRAIT
SELFPORTRAIT IN A CIRCLE OF FRIENDS FROM MANTUA
SELFPORTRAIT WITH BROTHER PHILIPP, JUSTUS LIPSIUS AND ANOTHER SCHOLAR
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THE LAMENTATION

THE LAMENTATION
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THE LAST SUPPER
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THE MEETING OF ABRAHAM AND MELCHIZEDEK
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THE RAISING OF THE CROSS
THE RAISING OF THE CROSS
THE RAPE OF EUROPA
THE RAPE OF THE SABINE WOMEN
THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
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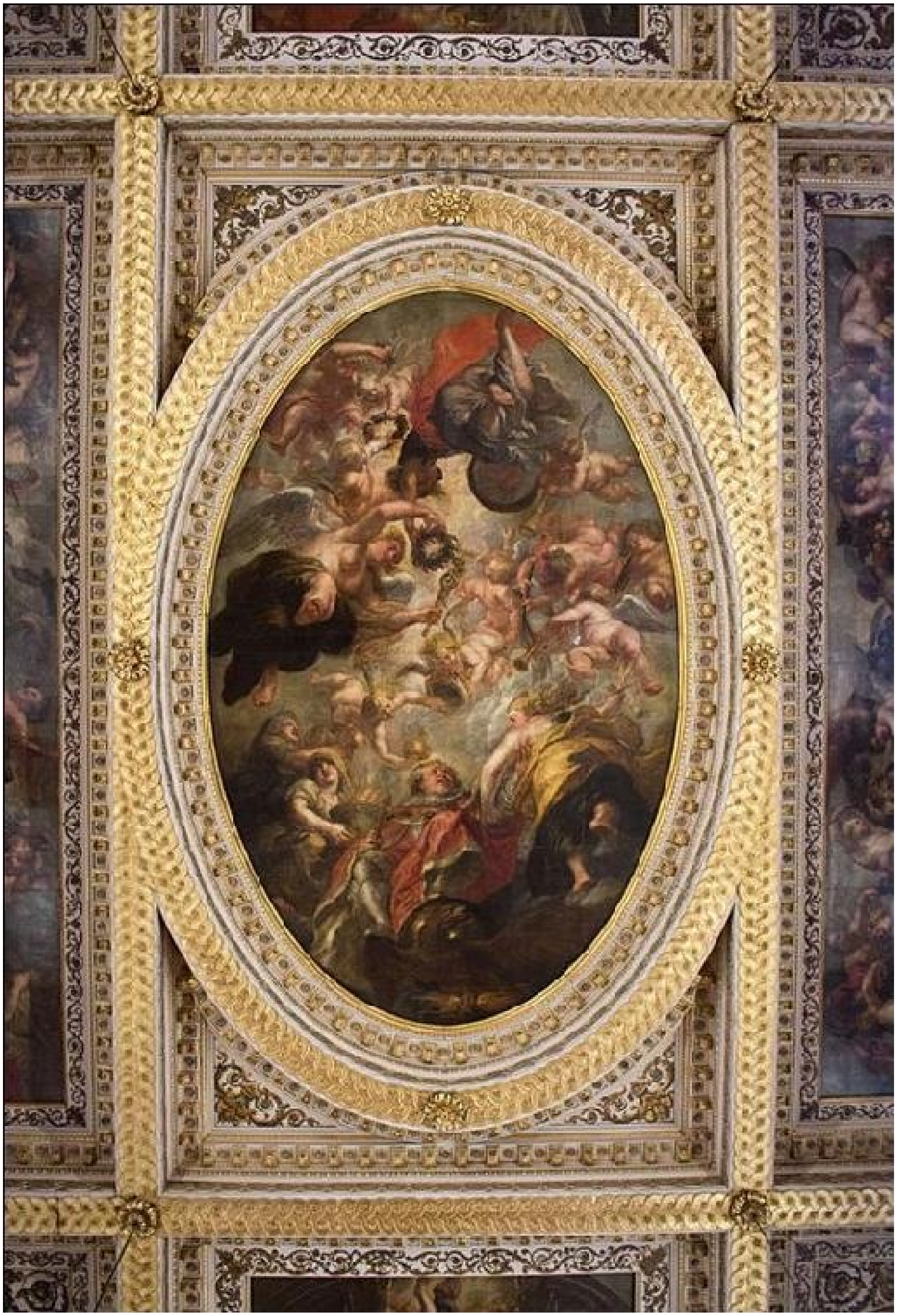
VIRGIN AND CHILD
VIRGIN AND CHILD
VIRGIN AND CHILD
VIRGIN AND CHILD ADORED BY ANGELS
VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH THE INFANT ST. JOHN
VIRGIN IN ADORATION BEFORE THE CHRIST CHILD
WOMAN WITH A MIRROR

The Drawings

The Banqueting House, London — during the 1630´s, Rubens continued to take on major commissions for foreign patrons, including the ceiling paintings of the Banqueting House at Inigo Jones’s Palace of Whitehall.



The central panel of the ceiling in the Banqueting House, in situ— ‘The Apotheosis of James I’

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Study for a Standing Female Saint
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Portrait of Marie de Medici
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Head of woman
Head of woman
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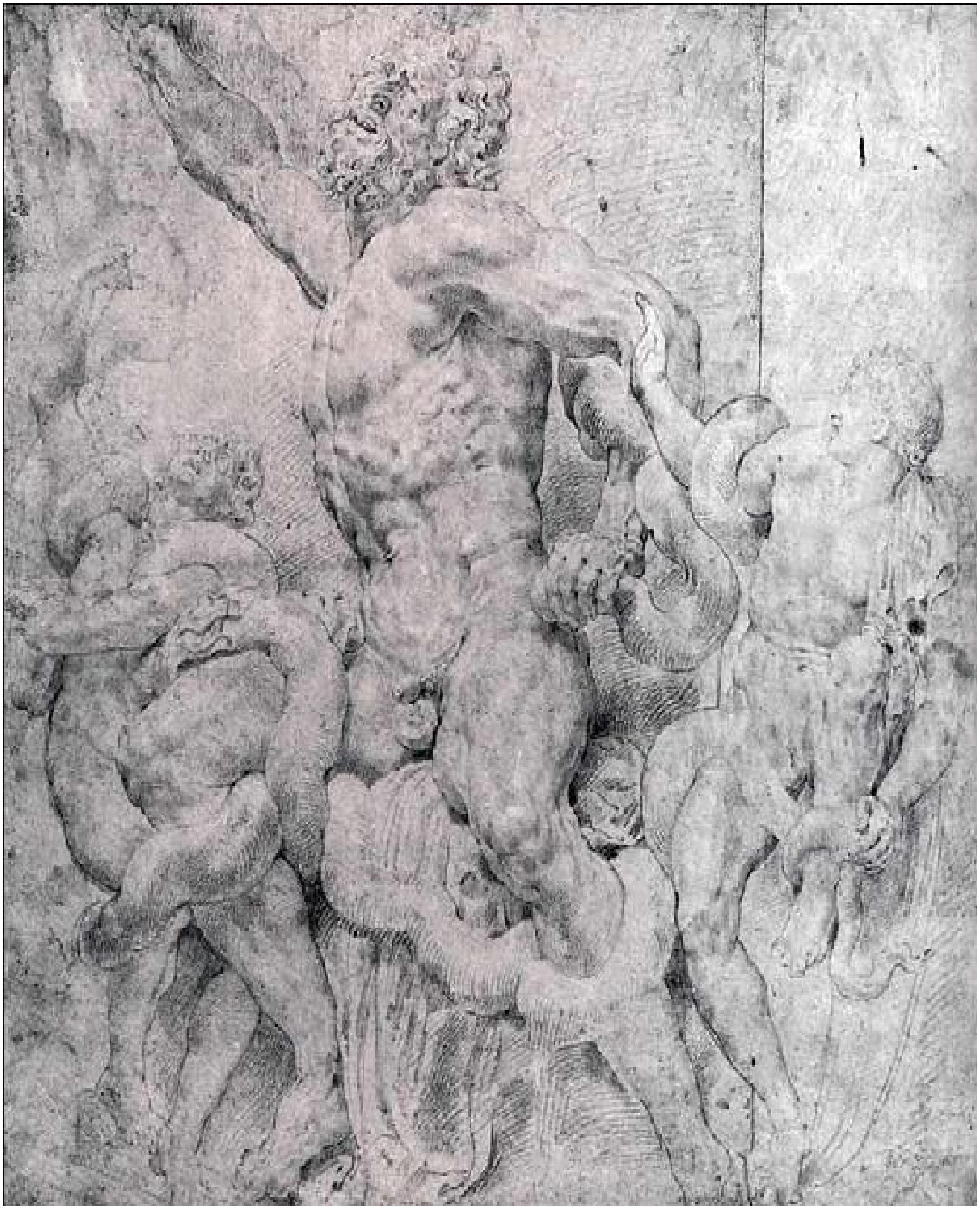
The Abduction of Bulls
The Meeting of Scipion and Gannibal
The Nativity of the Virgin Mary
The Three Caryatids

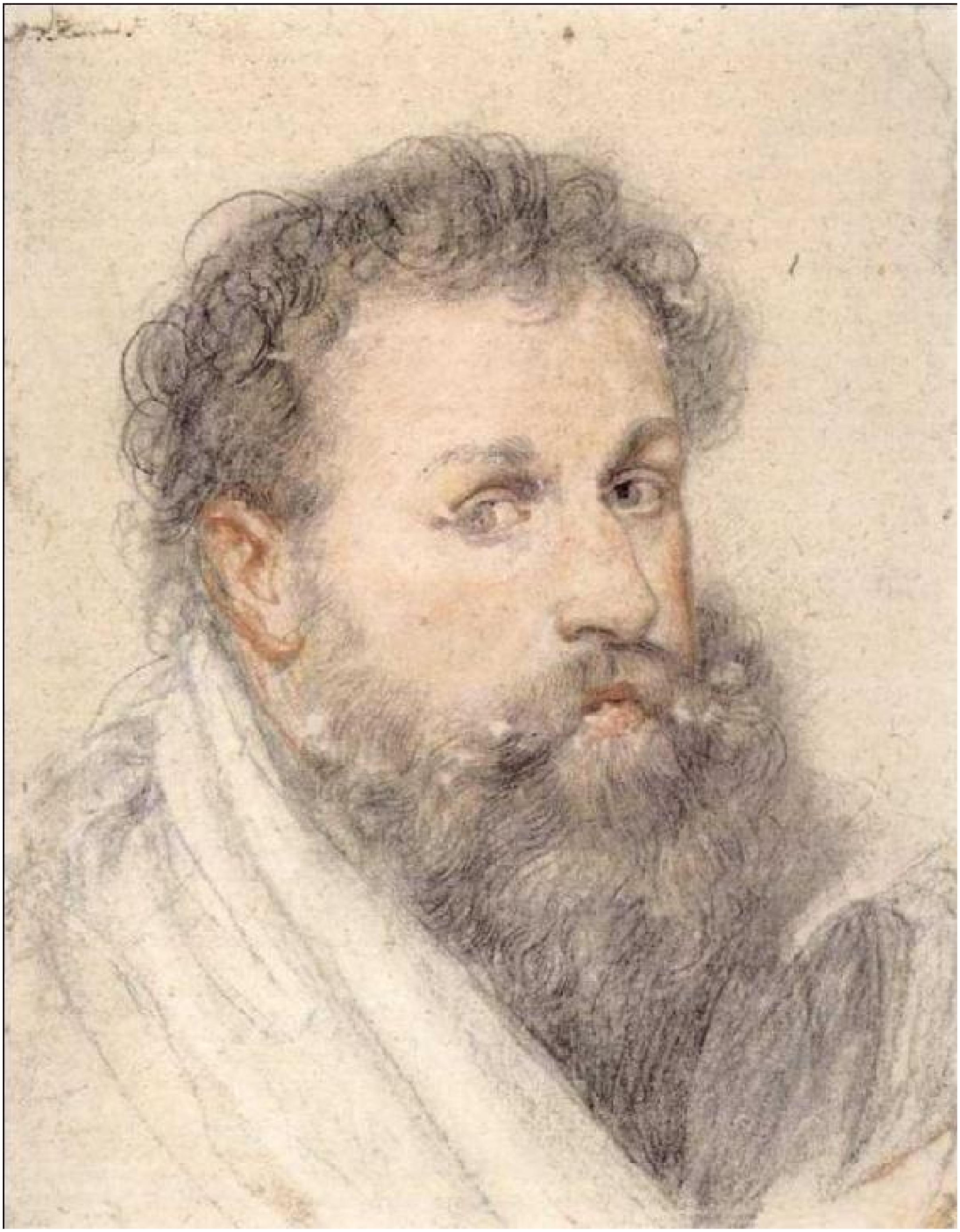
Laocoon and His Sons

1601
45.7 x 47.5 cm



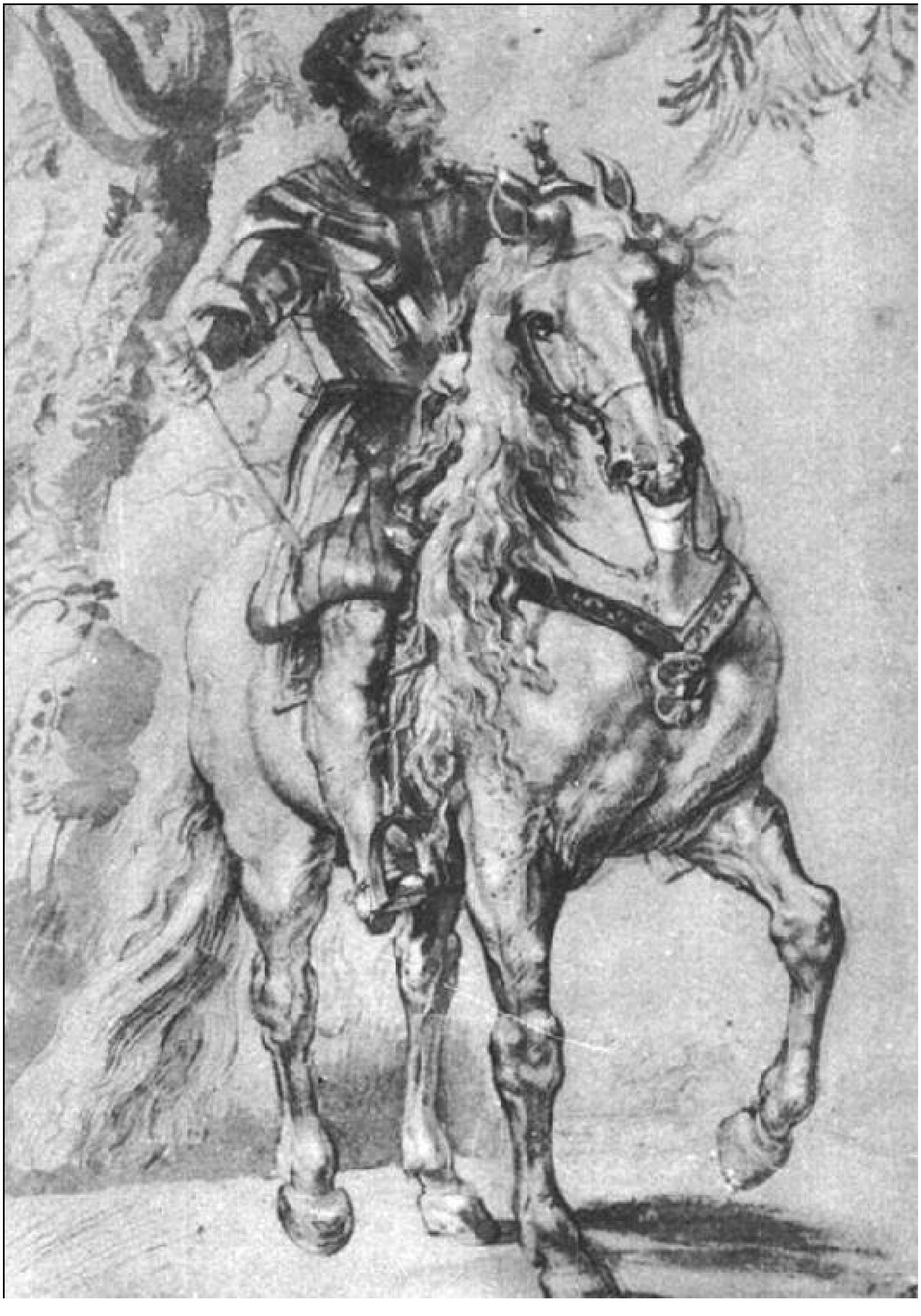
Portrait of a man

c.1602
31 x 24 cm



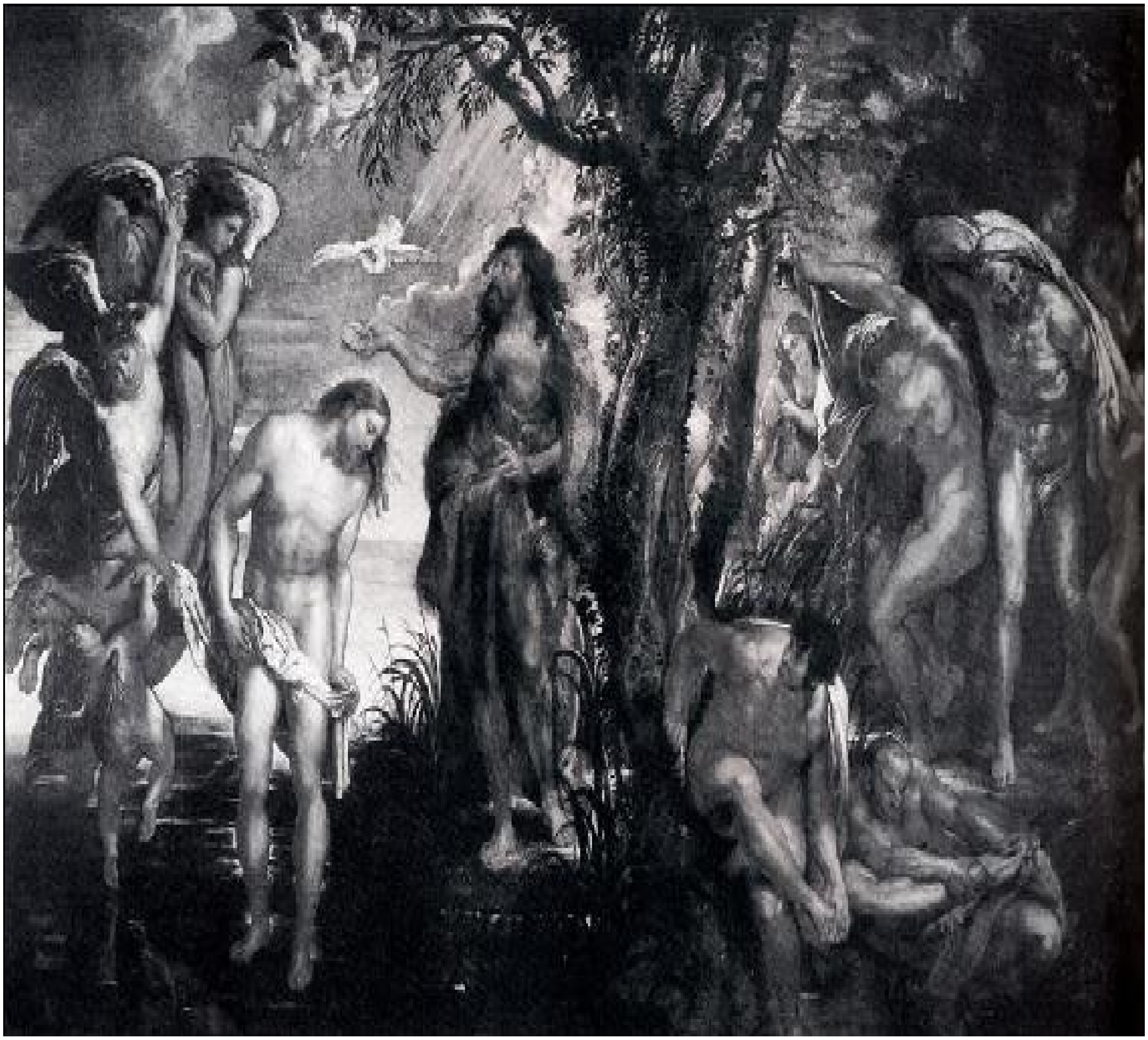
Study for an Equestrian Portrait of the Duke of Lerma

1603
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



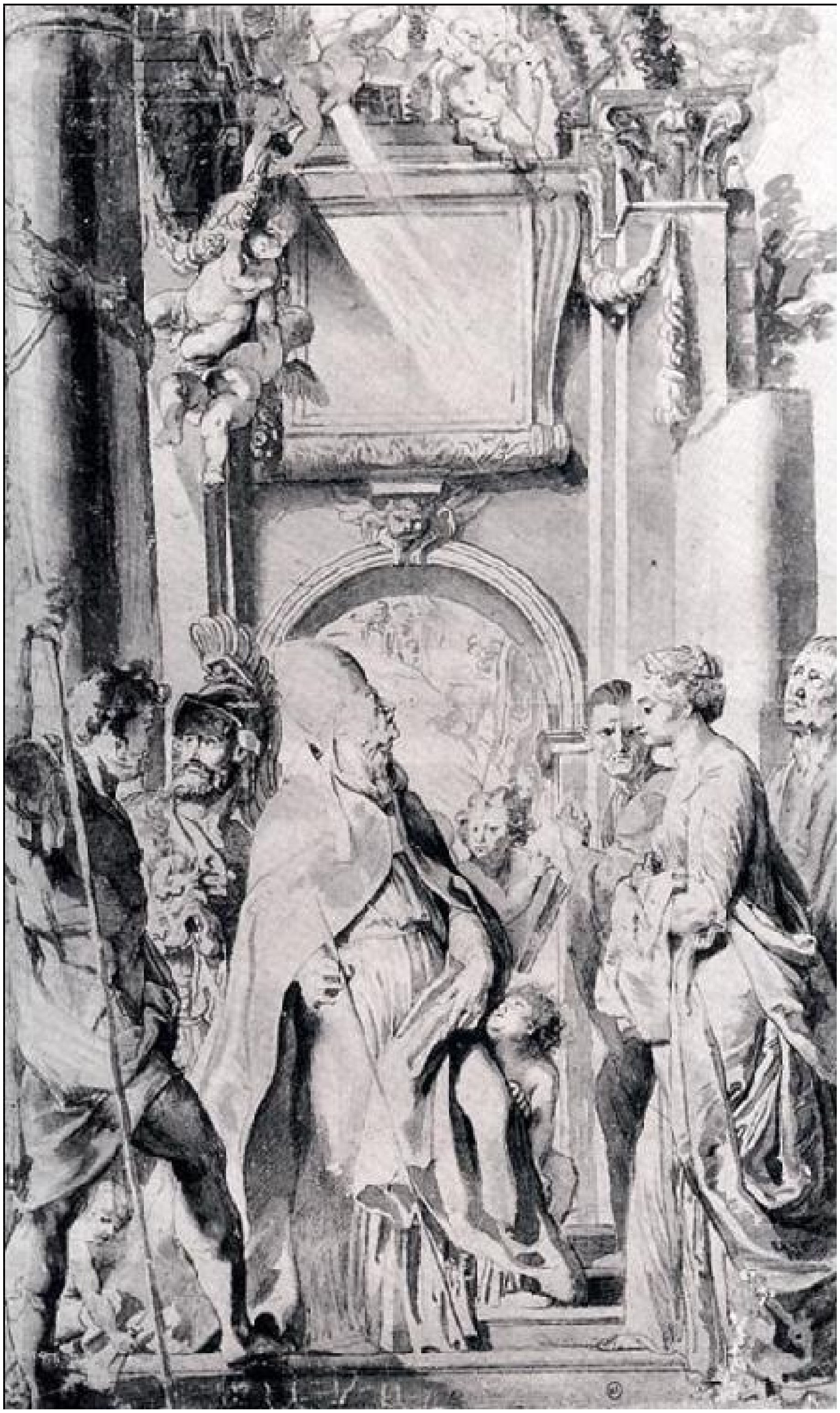
The Baptism of Christ

1605
482 x 605 cm
Private Collection



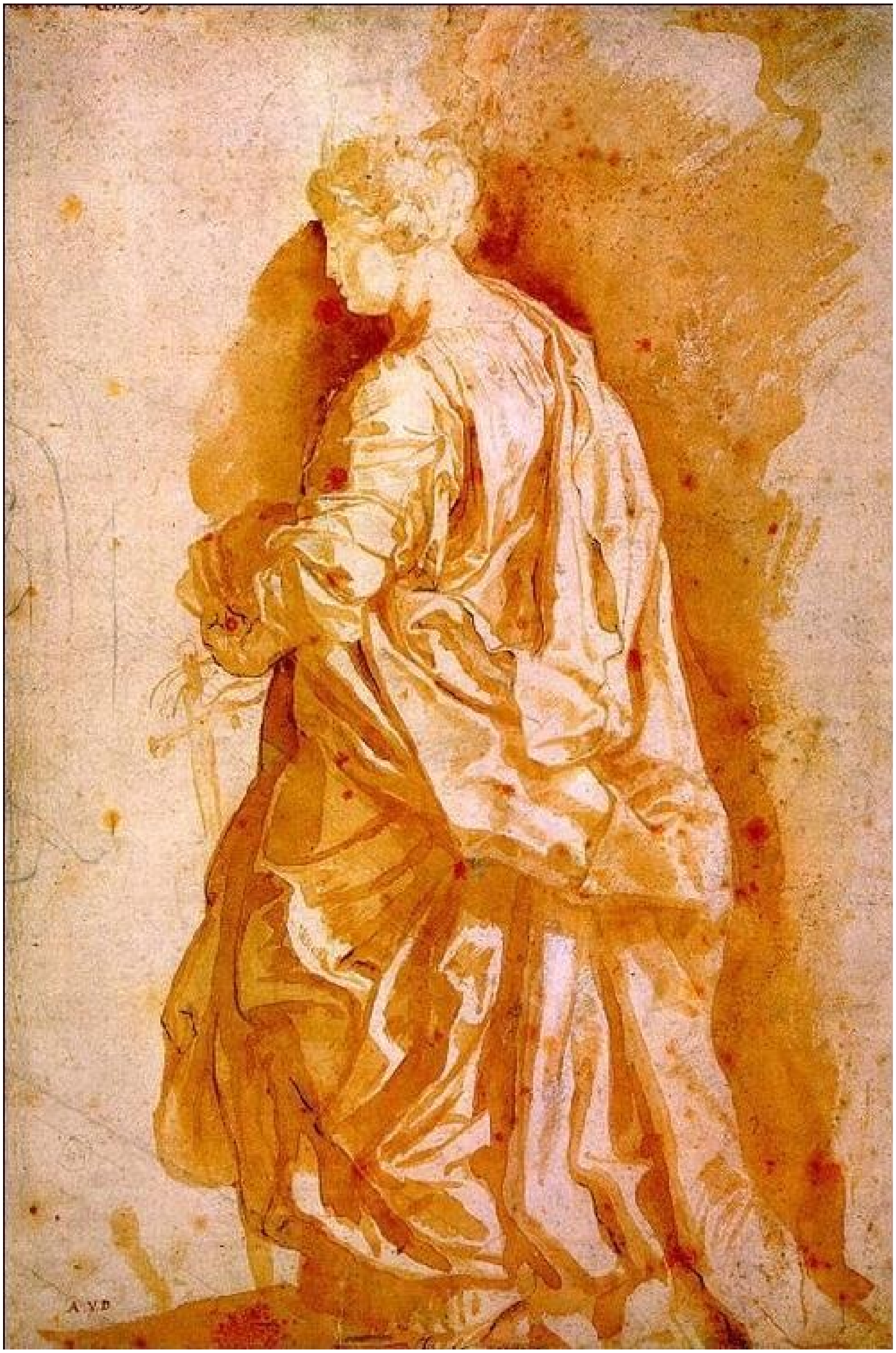
Saint Gregory with Saints Domitilla, Maurus, and Papianus

c.1607
Private Collection



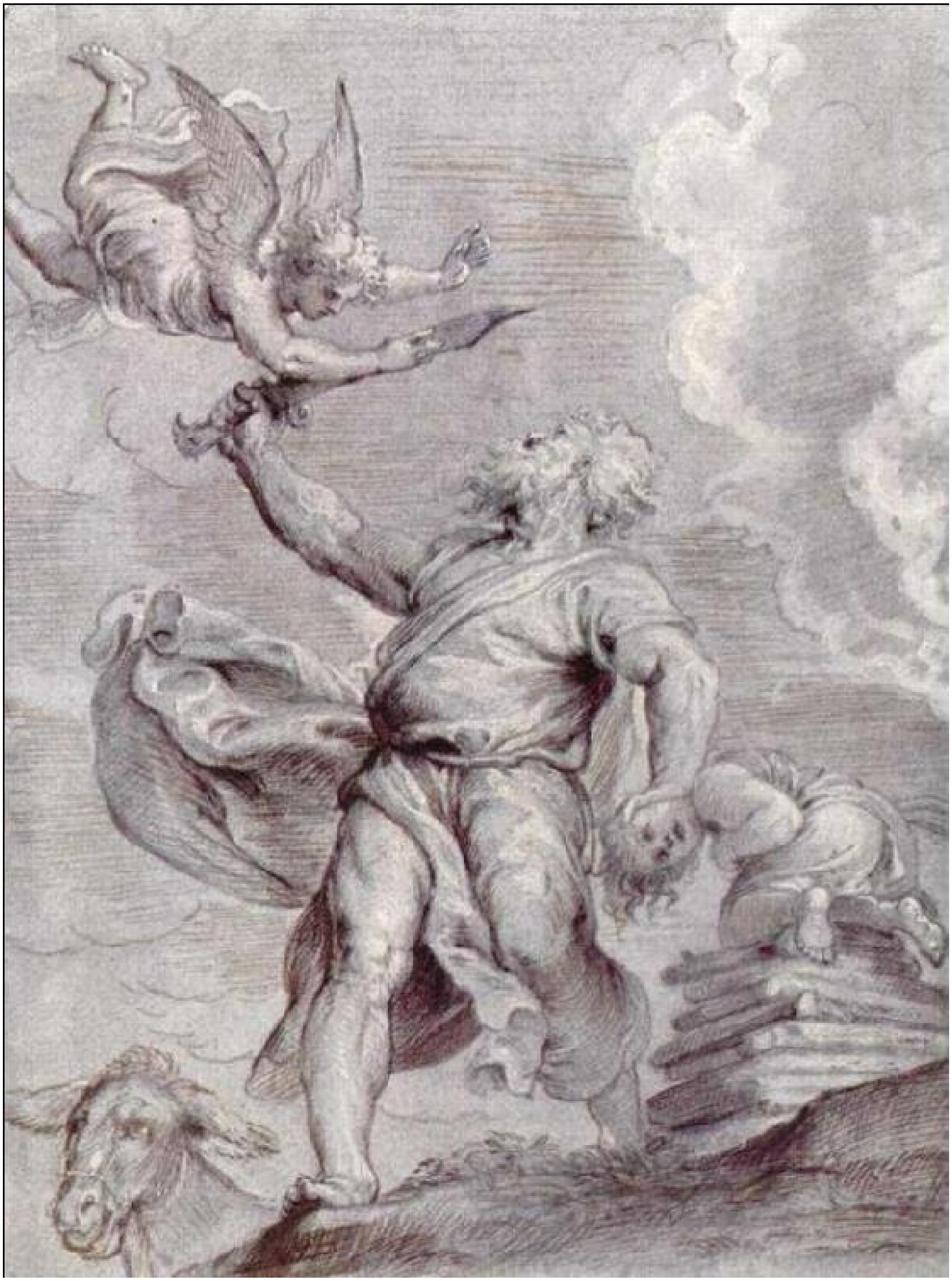
Study for a Standing Female Saint

c.1607
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City


A.V.D

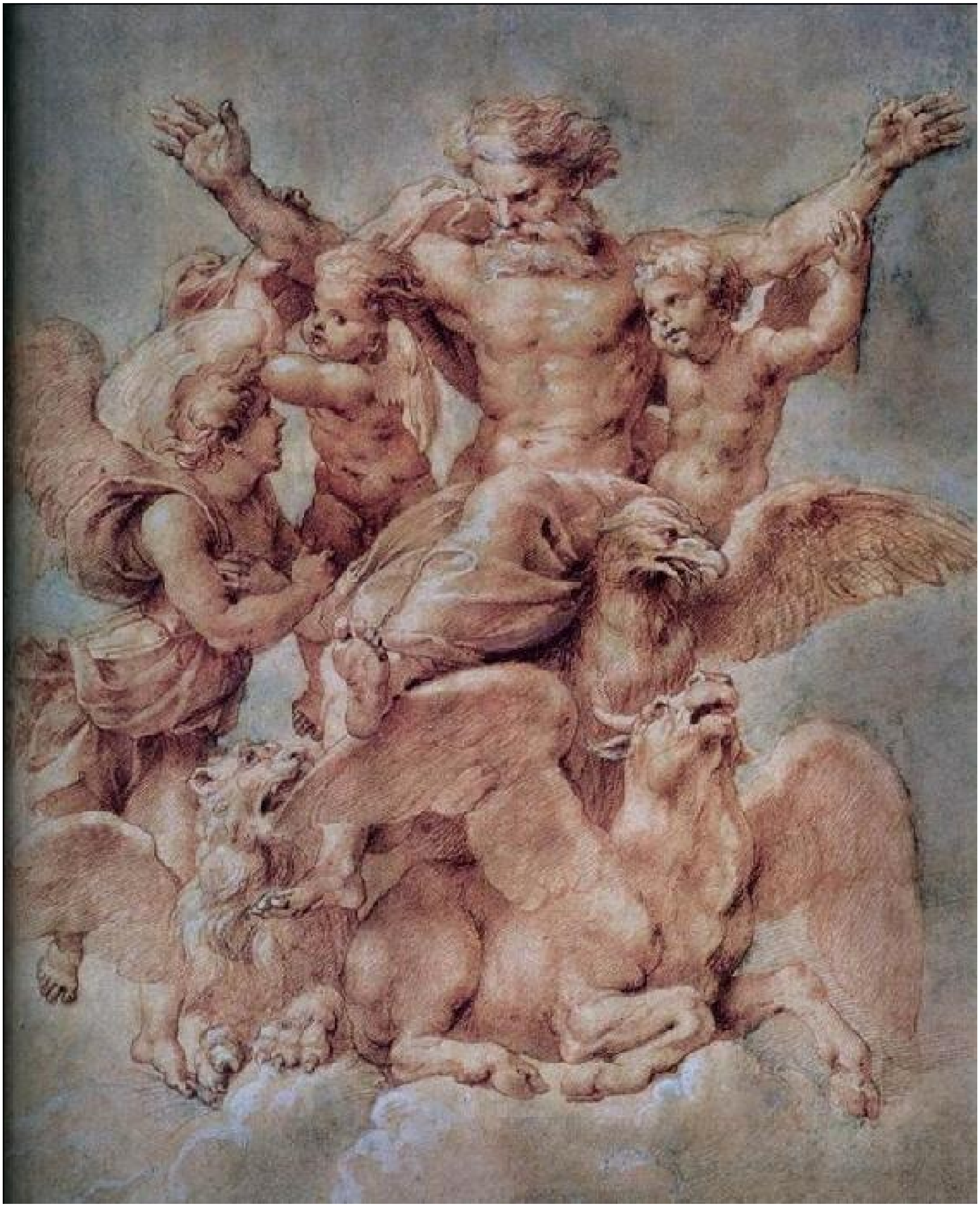
Sacrifice of Abraham

c.1608
33 x 25 cm



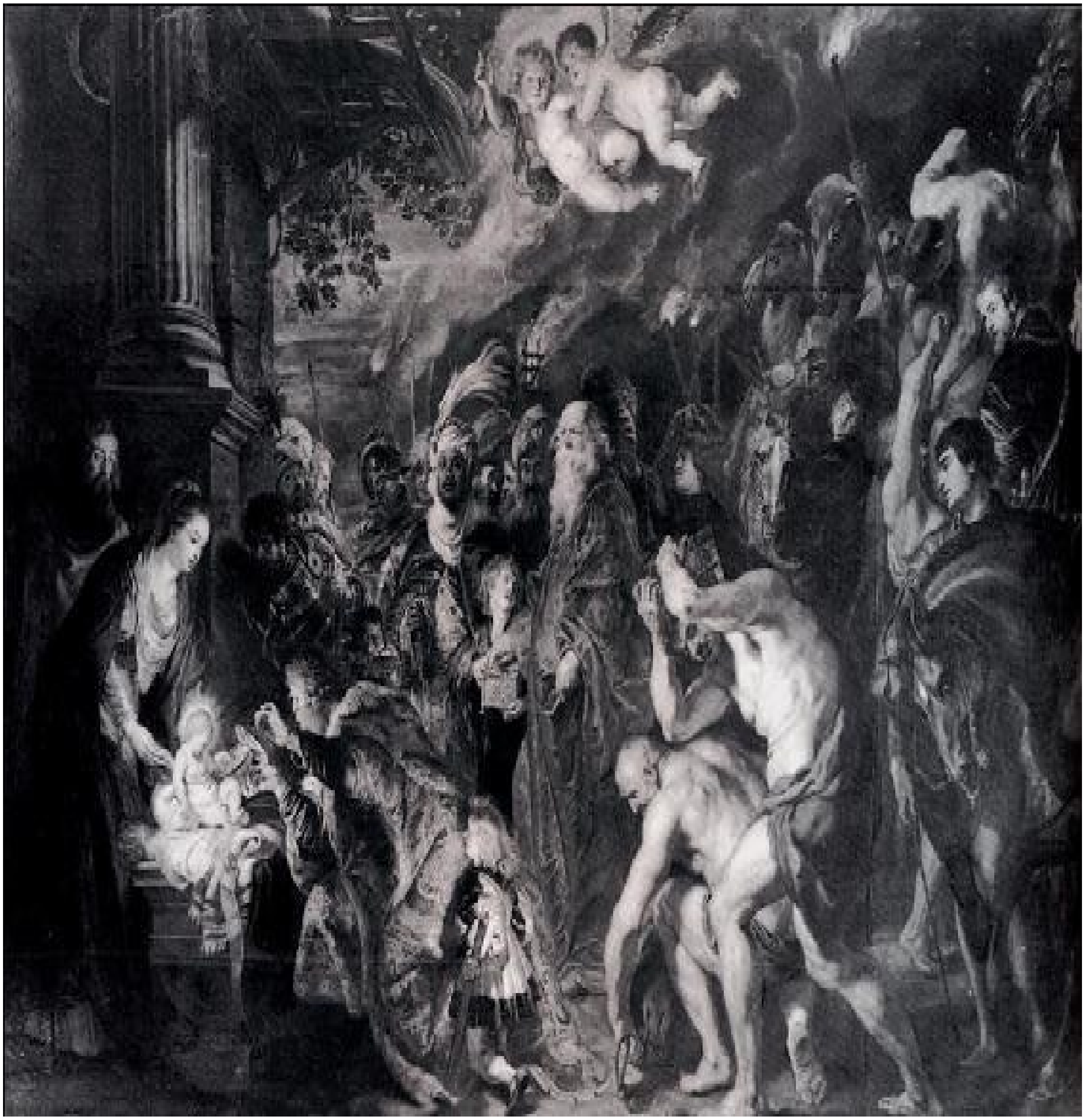
Vision of Ezekiel

1608
300 x 225 cm
Museo Horne, Florence, Italy



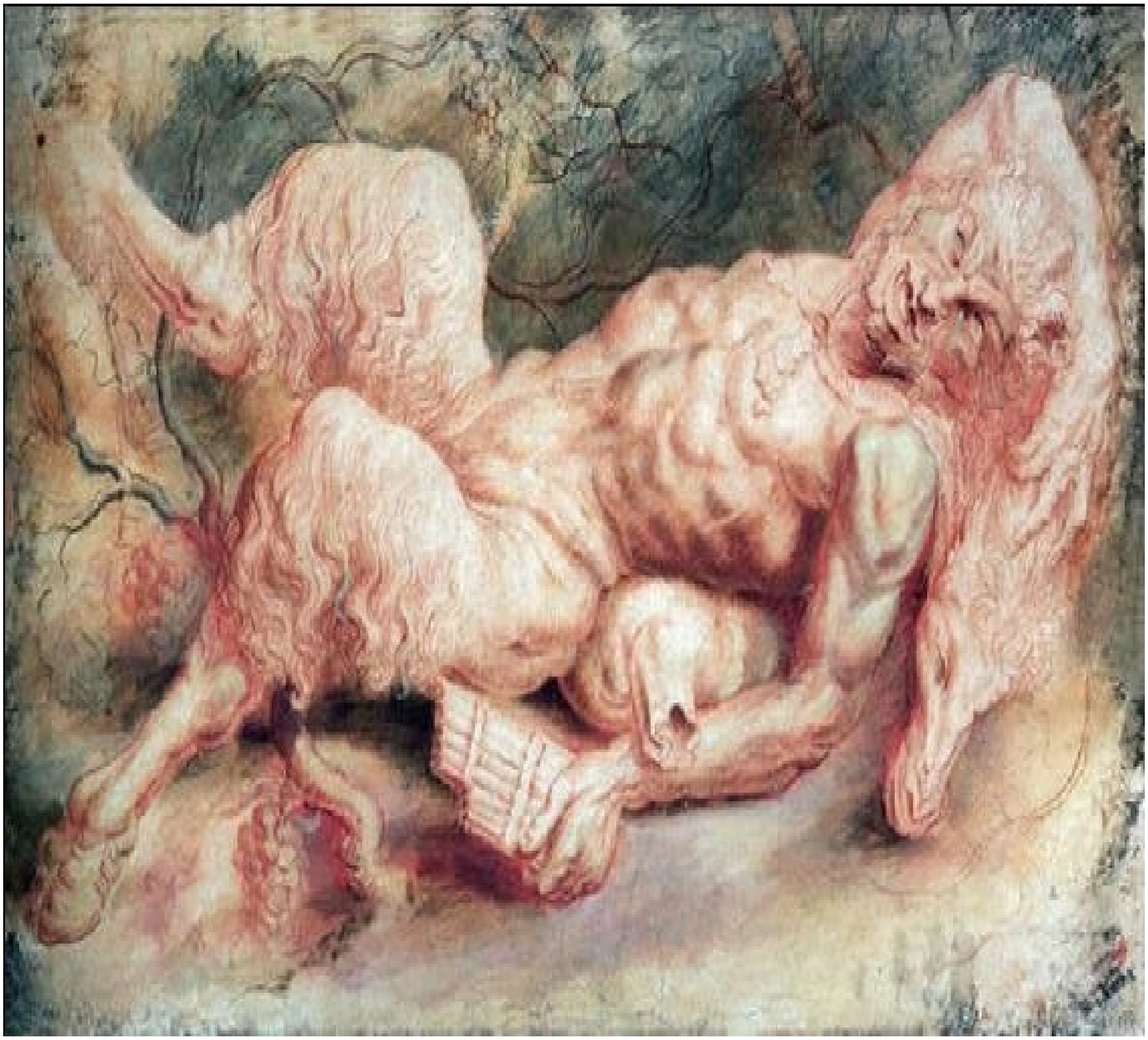
The Adoration of the Magi

1609
320 x 457 cm
Private Collection



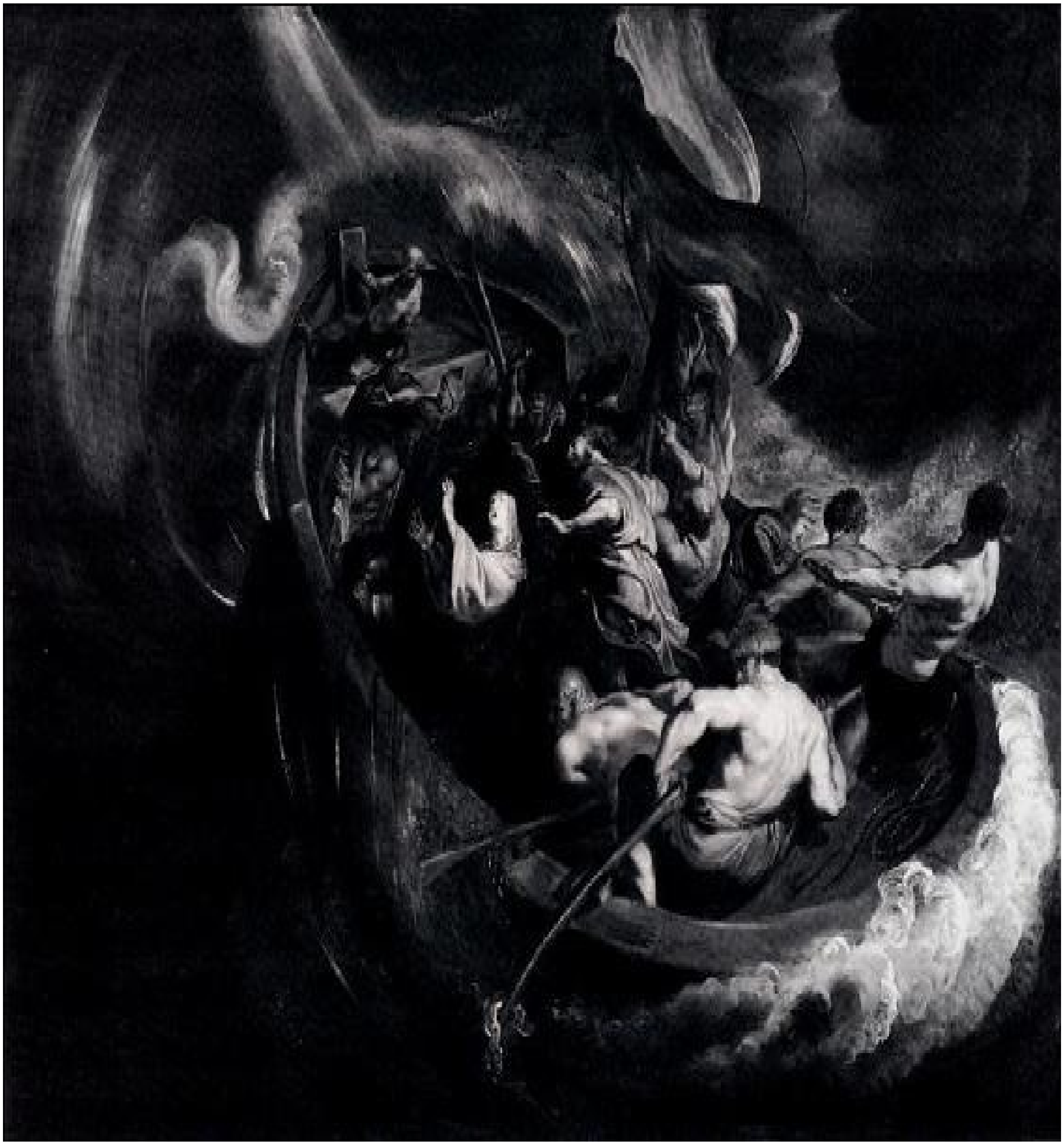
Pan Reclining

c.1610
31 x 49 cm



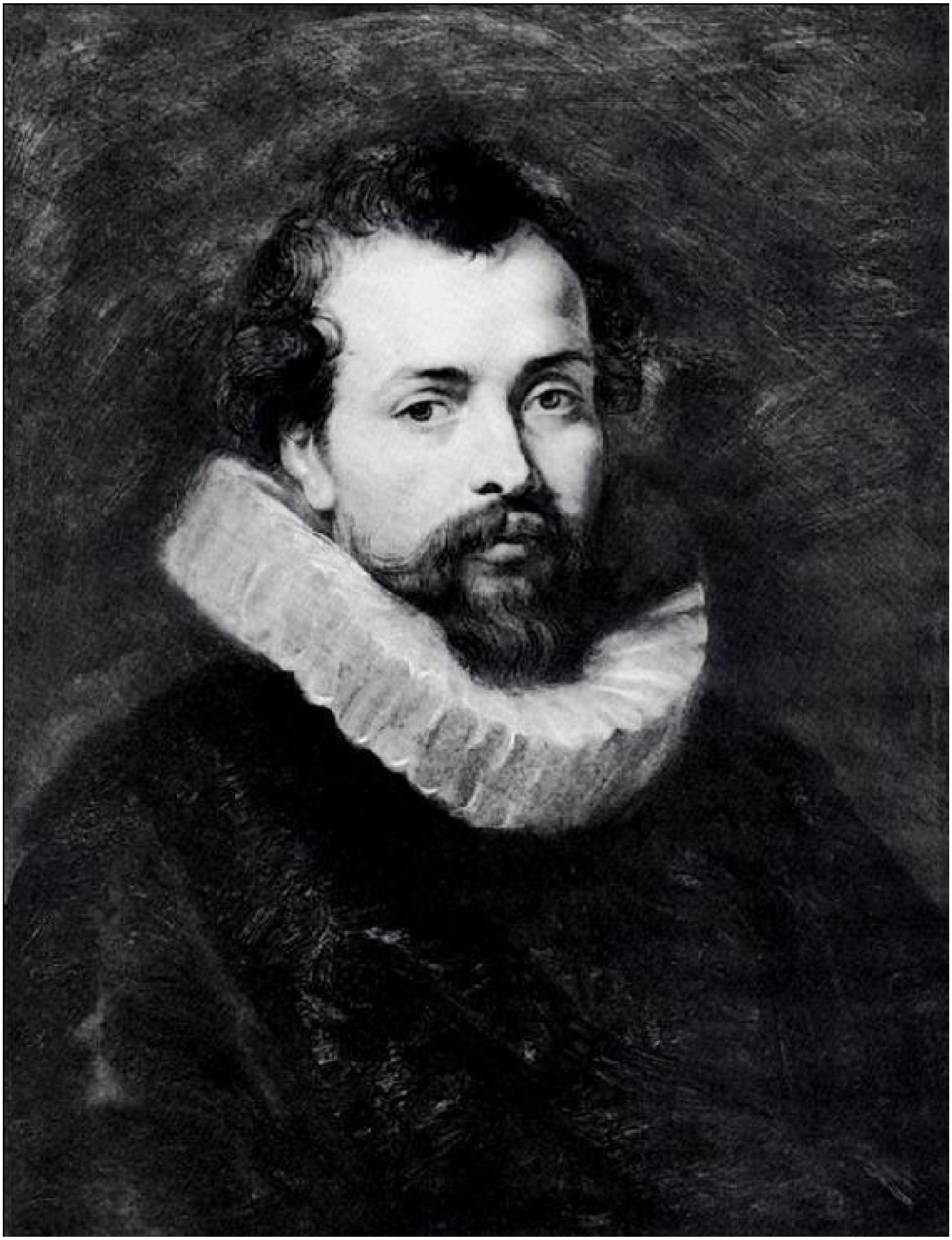
The Miracle of St. Walburga

c.1610
75.5 x 98.5 cm
Private Collection



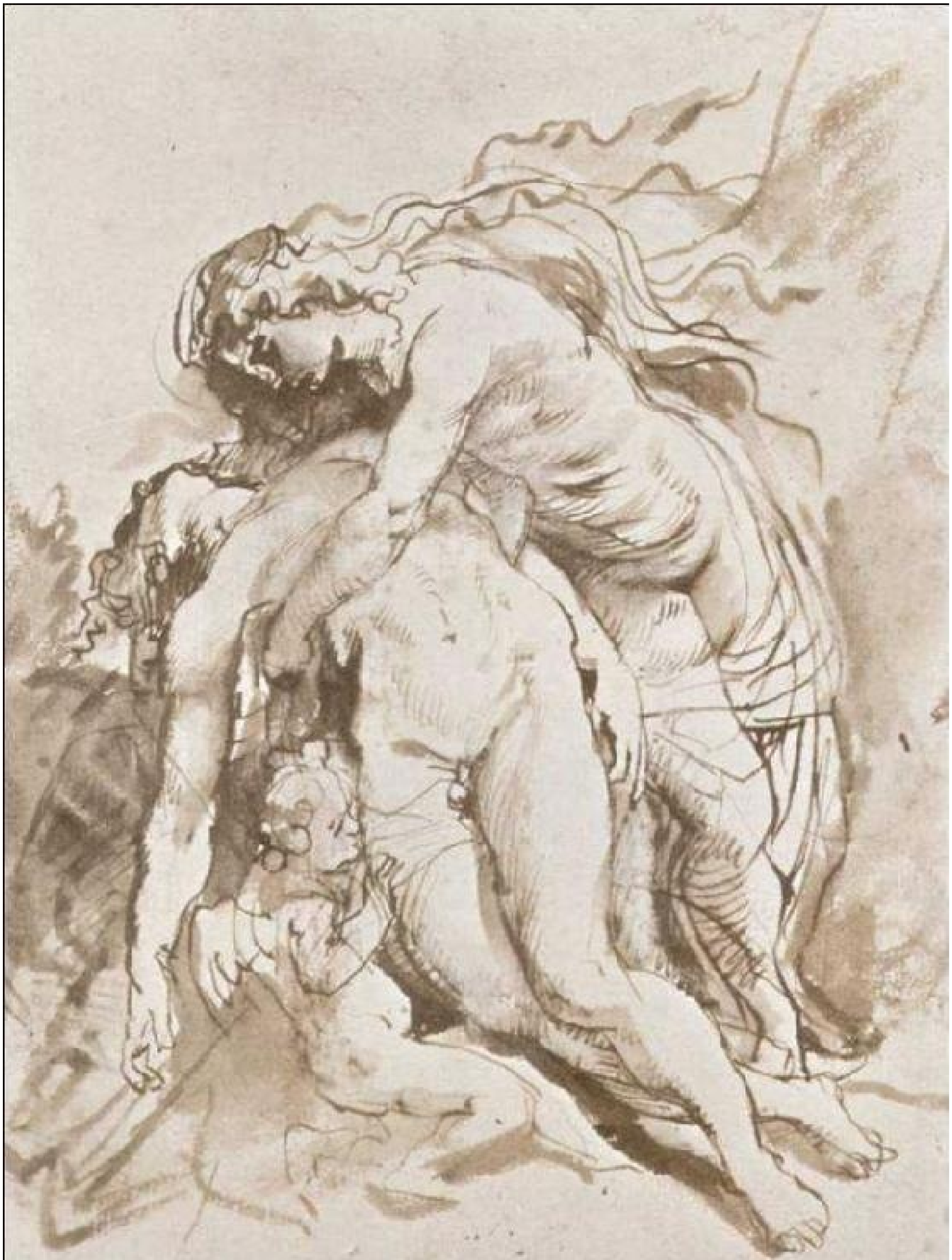
Portrait of Philip Rubens

c.1611
68.5 x 53.5 cm
Private Collection



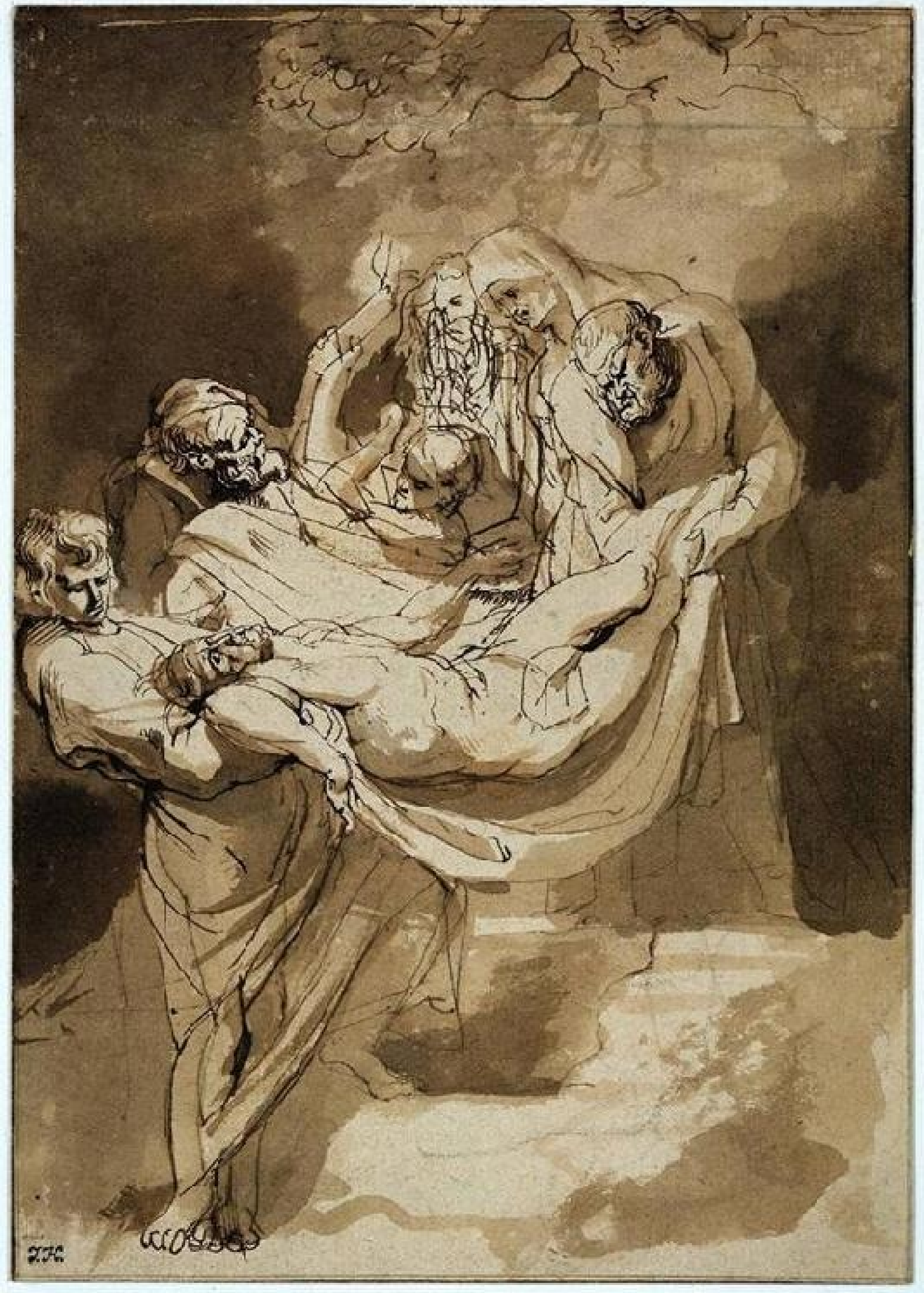
Death of Adonis

c.1612
22 x 15 cm
British Museum, London



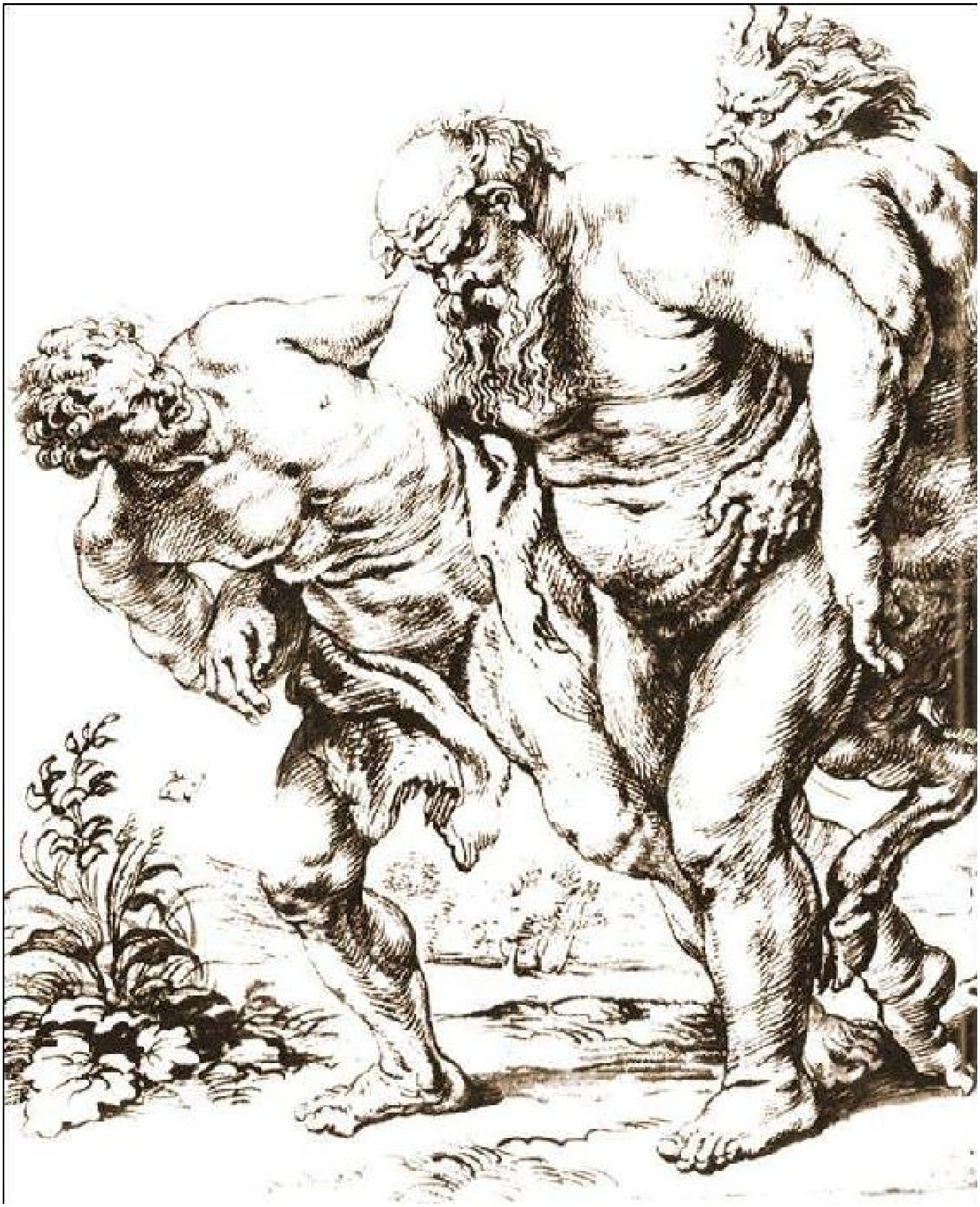
Entombment

c.1615
22.2 x 15.3 cm



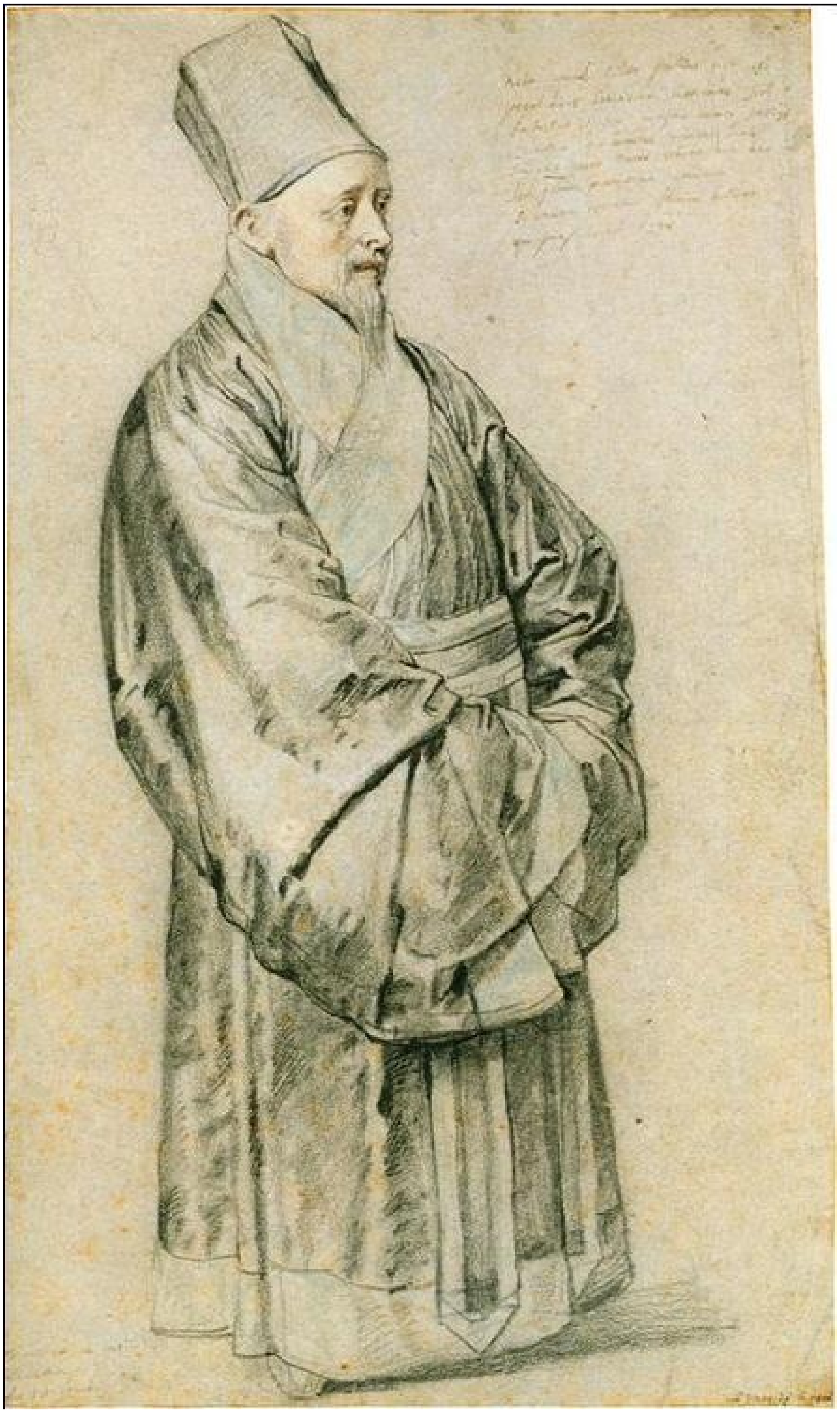
Silenus (or Bacchus) and Satyrs

c.1616
38 x 27 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



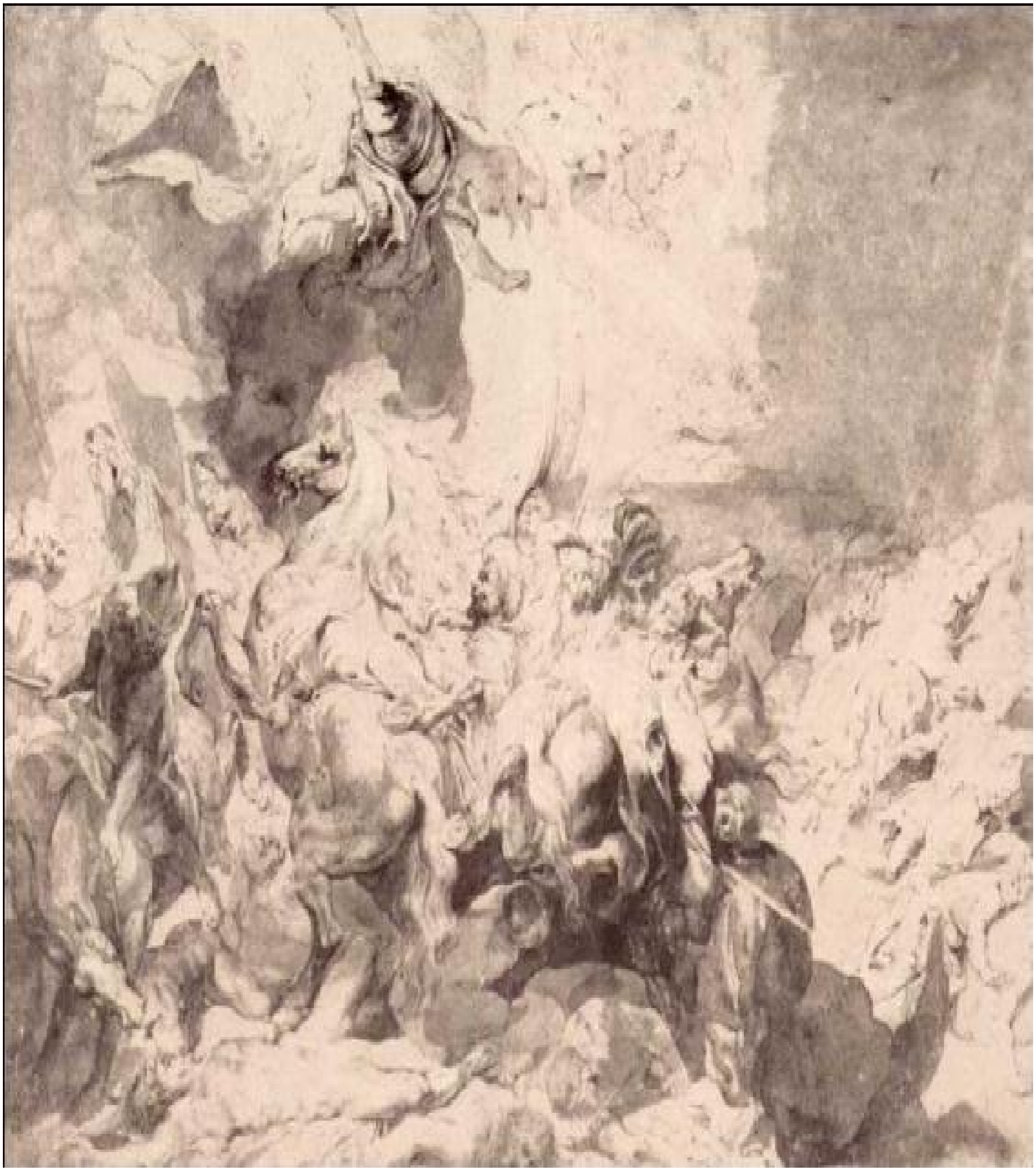
Nicolas Trigault

1617
45 x 26 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City



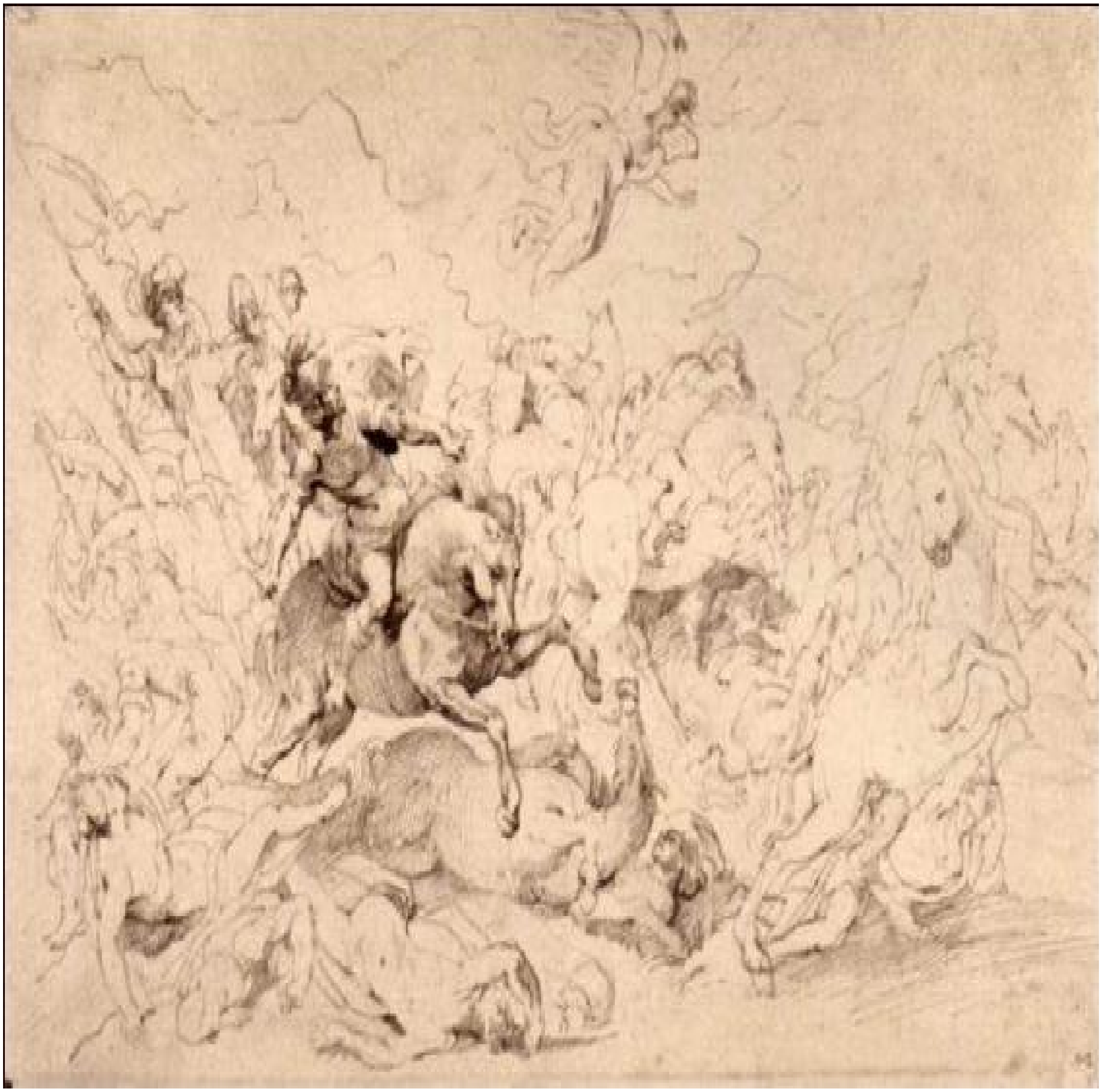
The Damage of Sennaherib

c.1618
41 x 51 cm



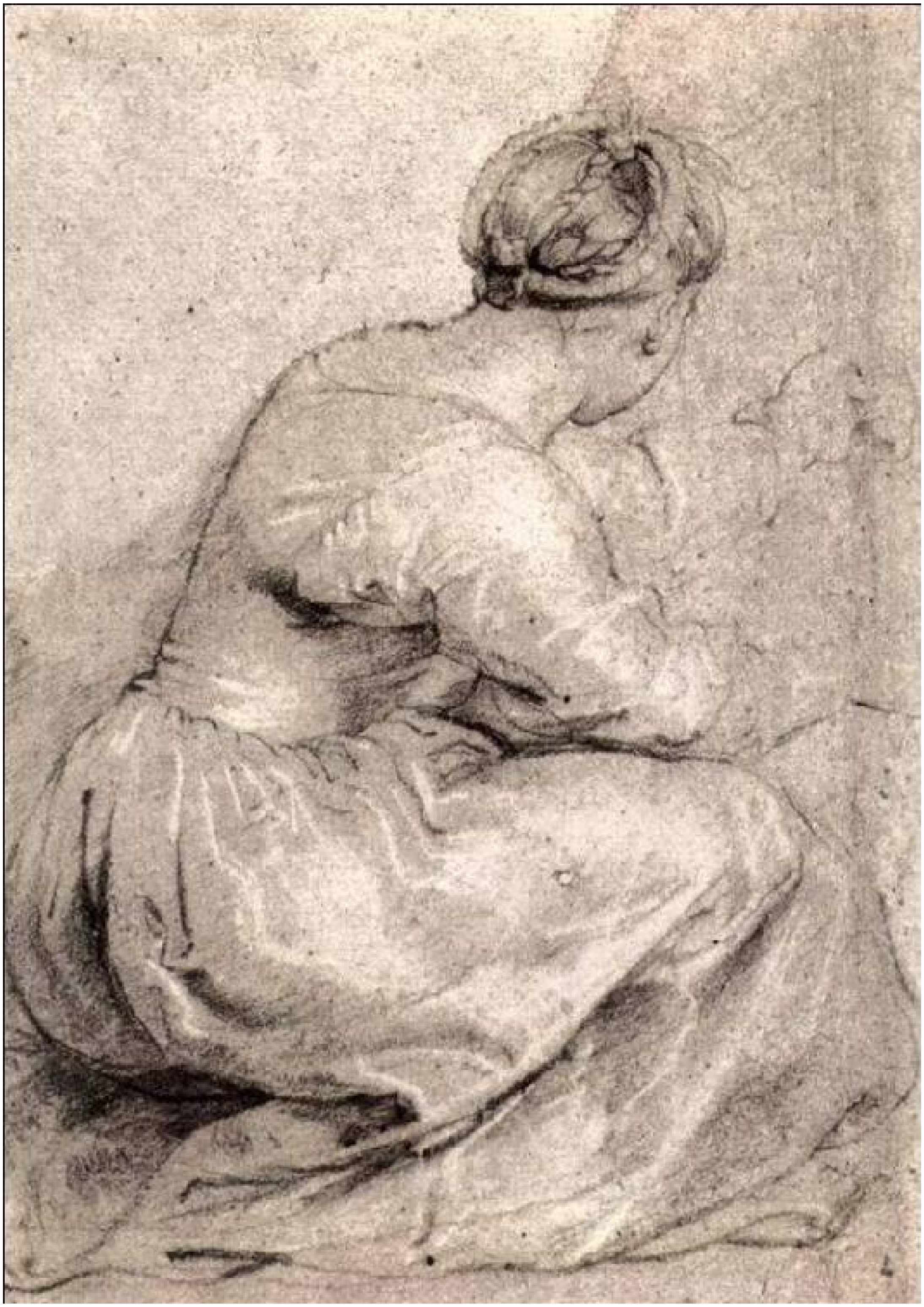
The Damage of Sennaherib

c.1618
22 x 31 cm



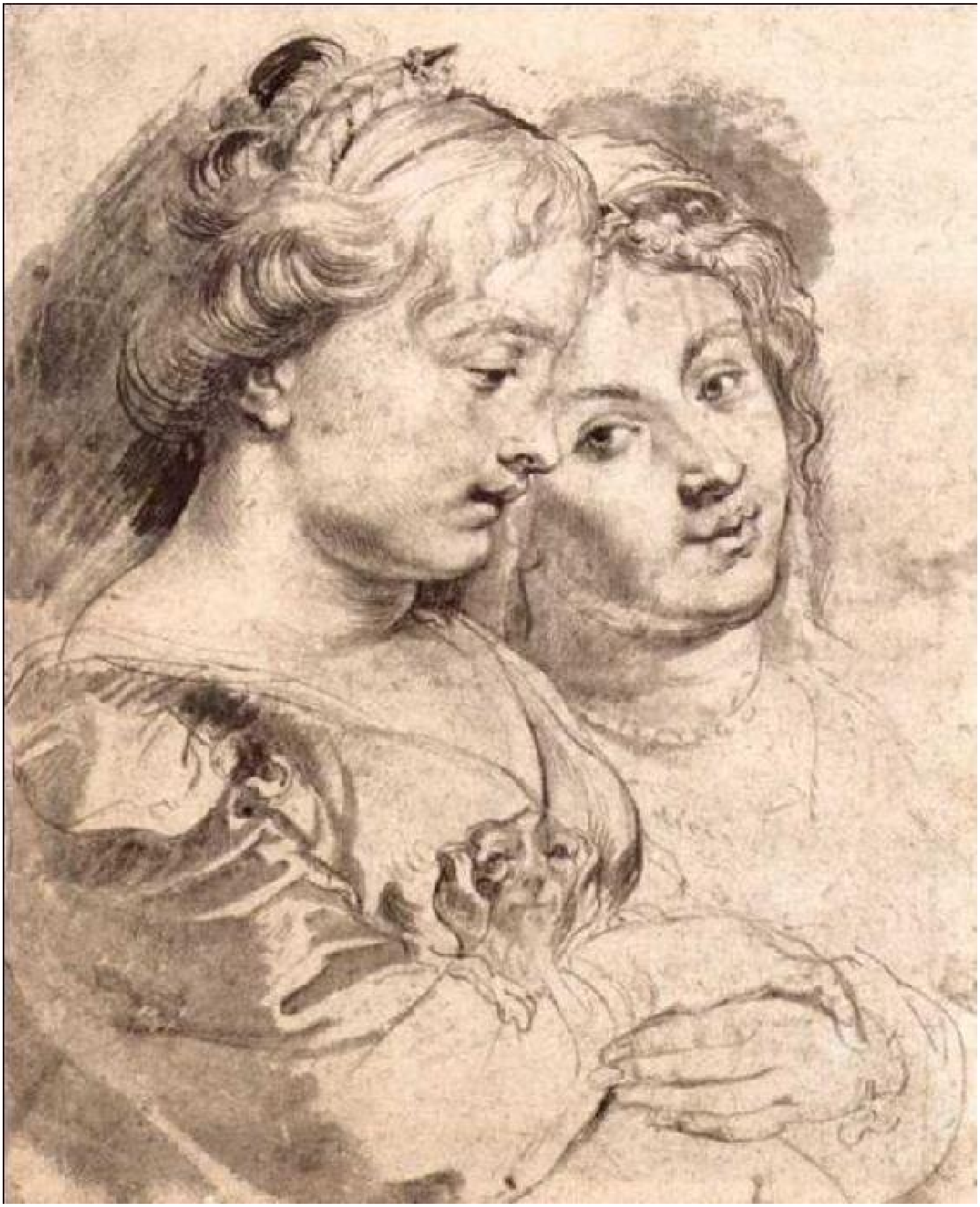
The Girl Squatted Down

1618
38 x 27 cm



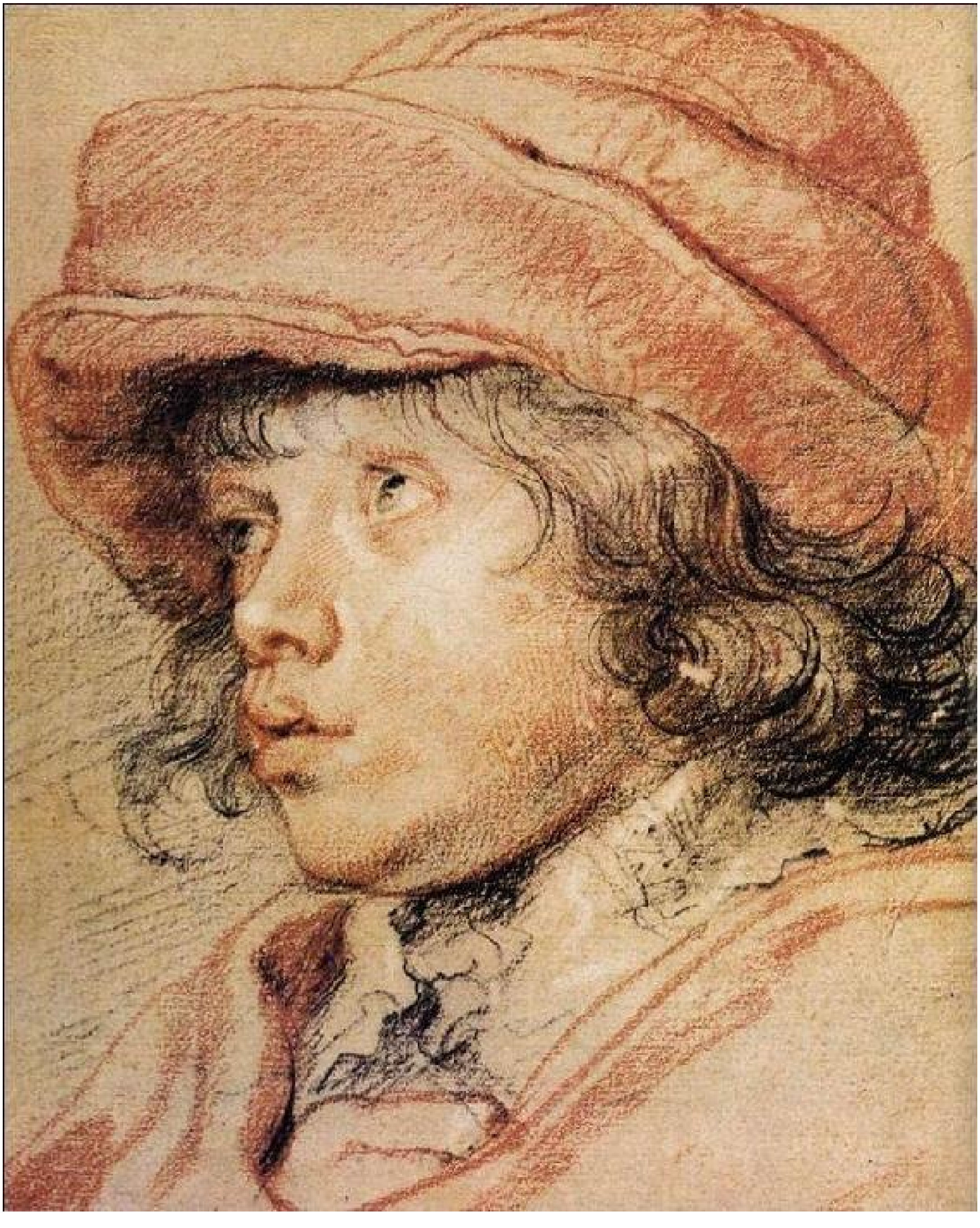
Two young women with a dog

c.1618
29 x 23 cm



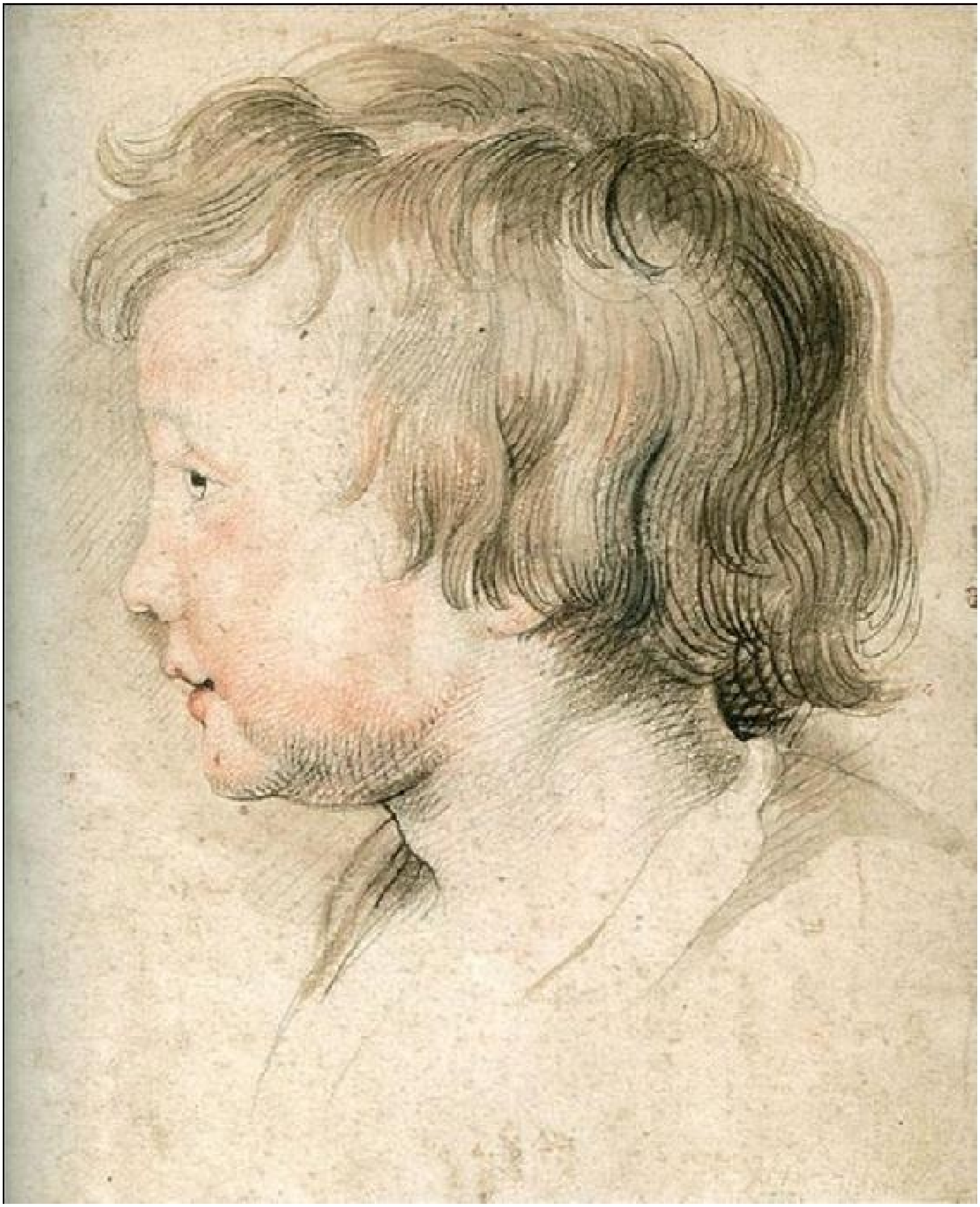
Nicolaas Rubens

1625-26
Drawing, 290 x 230 mm
Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna



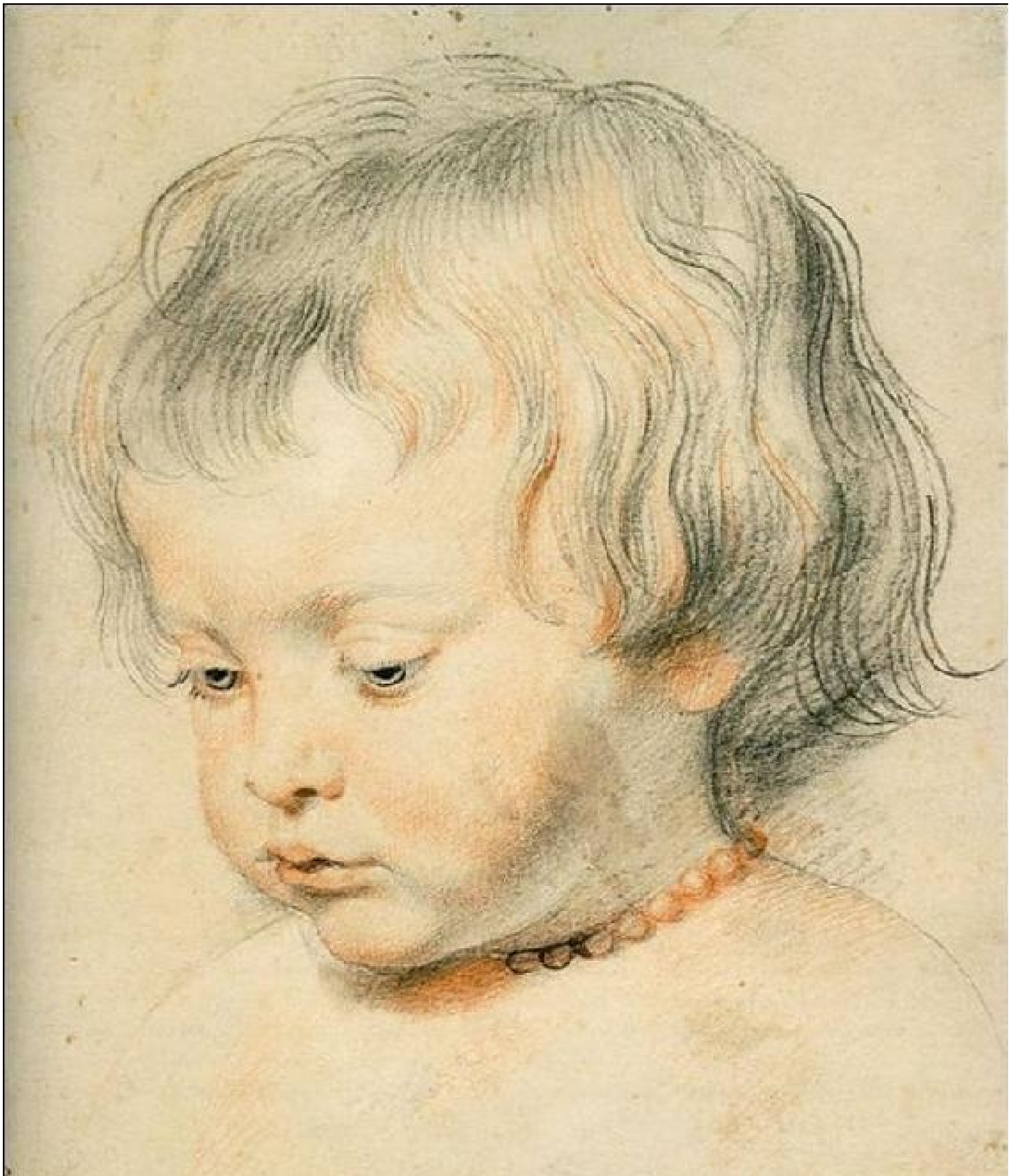
Albert Rubens

1619
23 x 20 cm



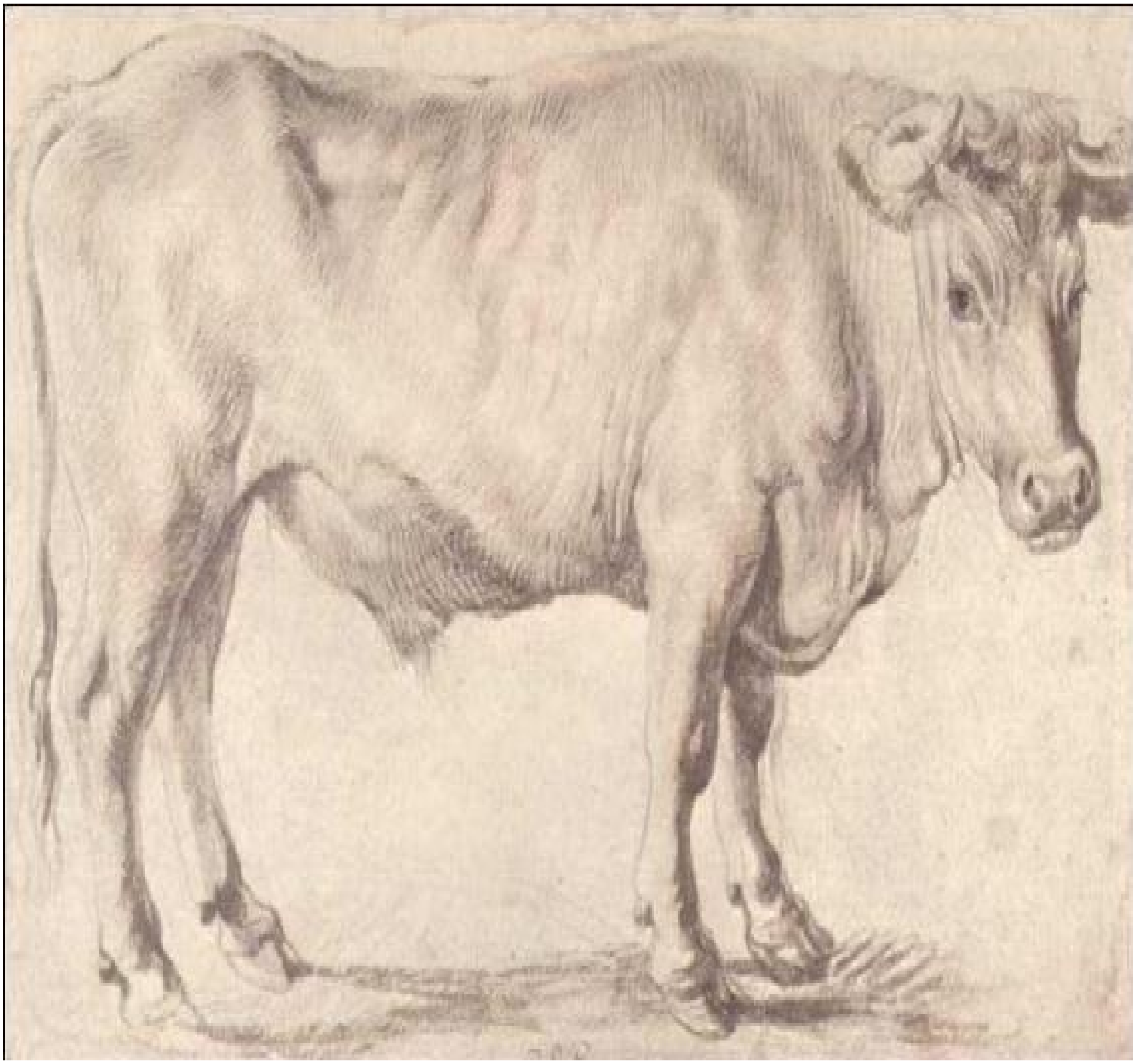
Nicolas Rubens

c.1619
25 x 20 cm


P P Rubens

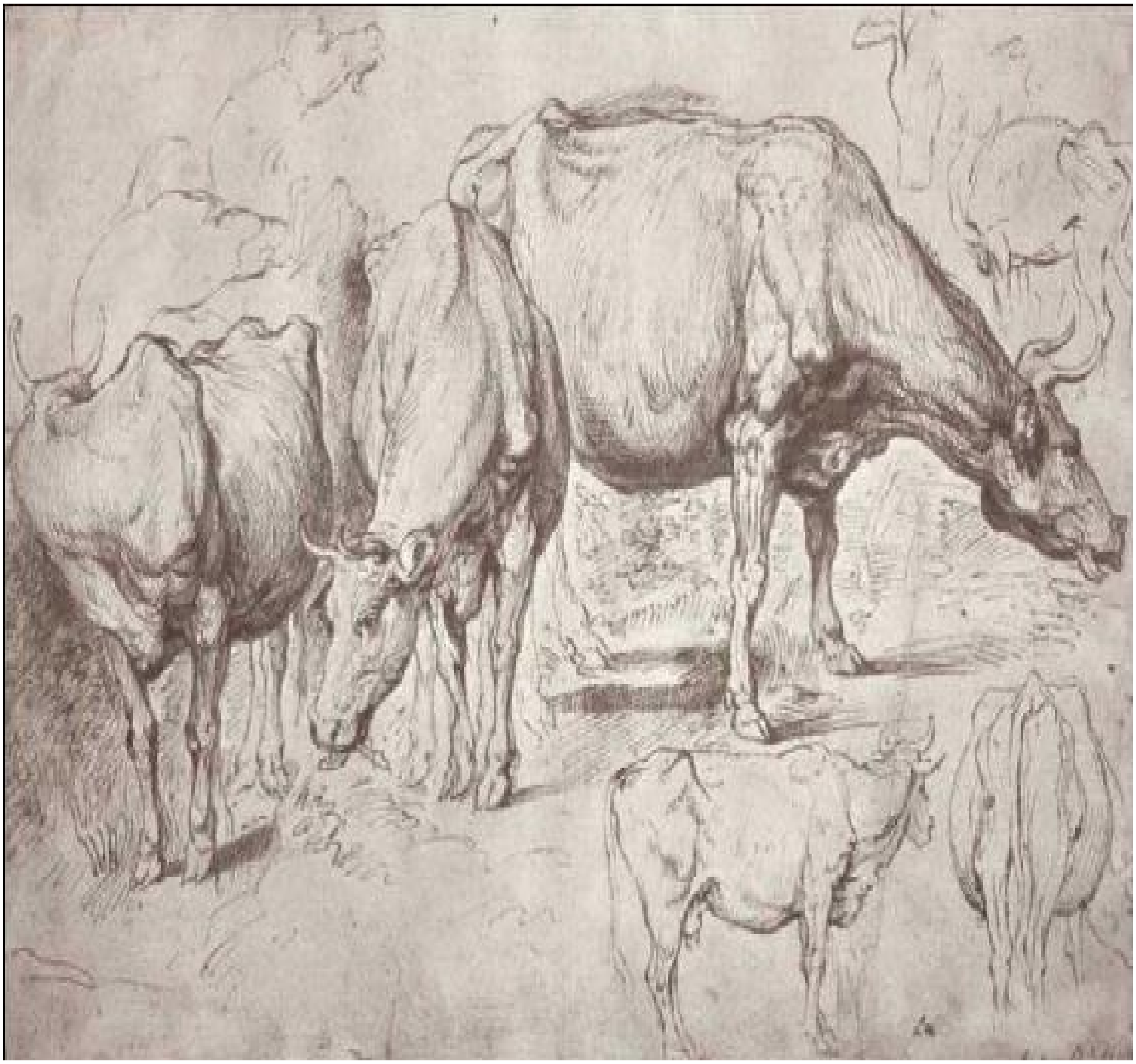
Bull

c.1620
28 x 44 cm



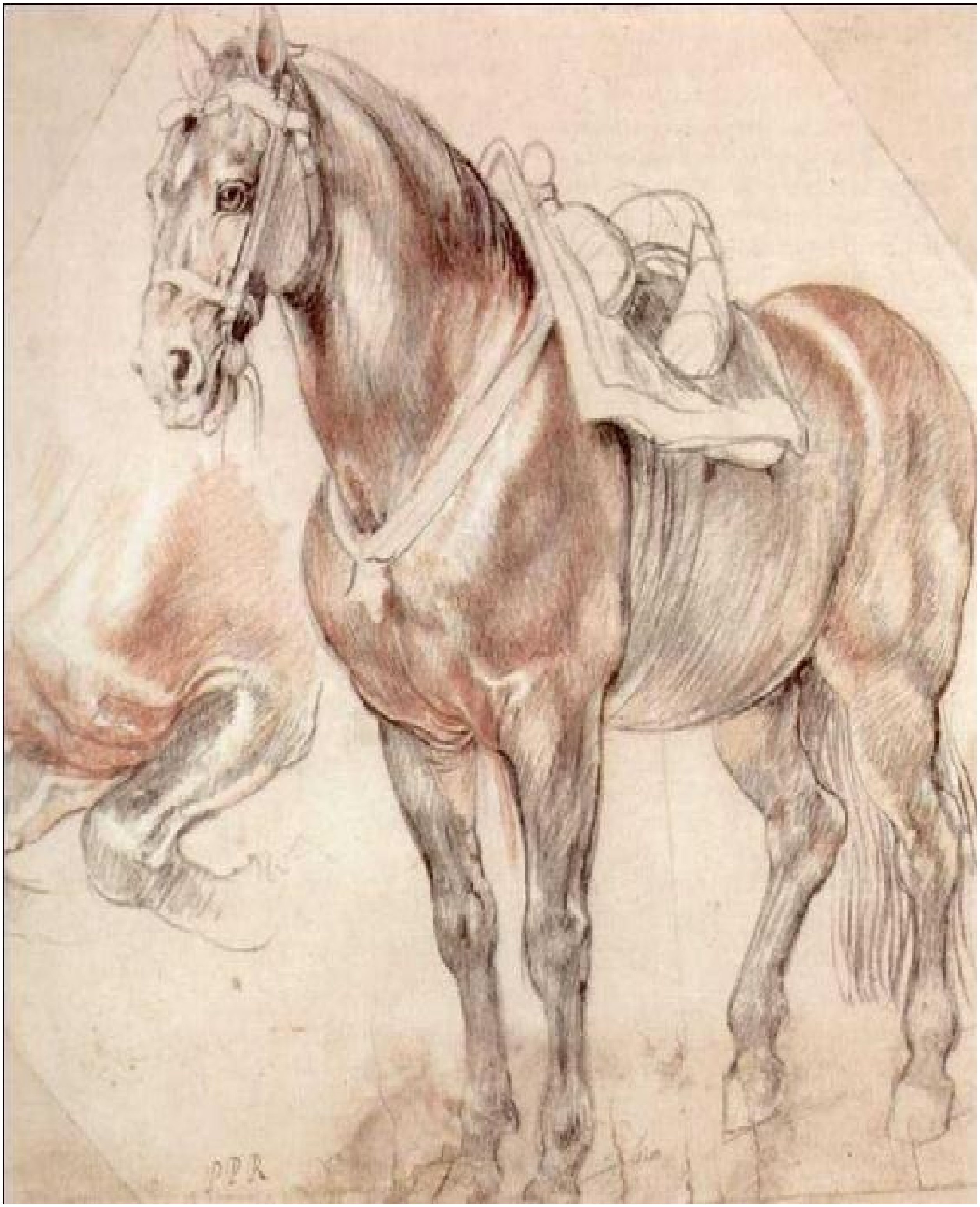
Cows

c.1620
34 x 52 cm
British Museum, London



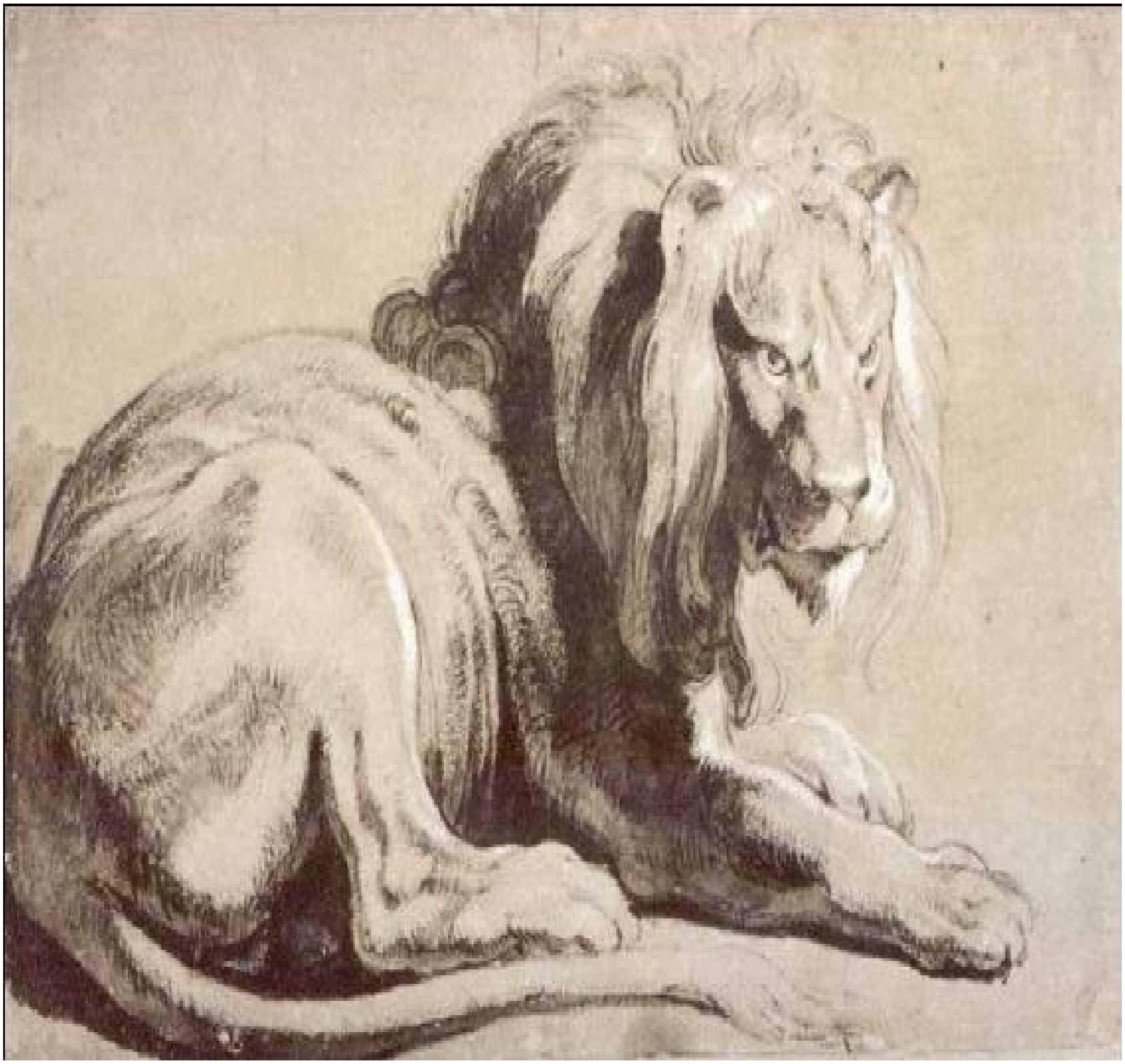
Etude of horse

c.1620
40 x 42 cm


PPR

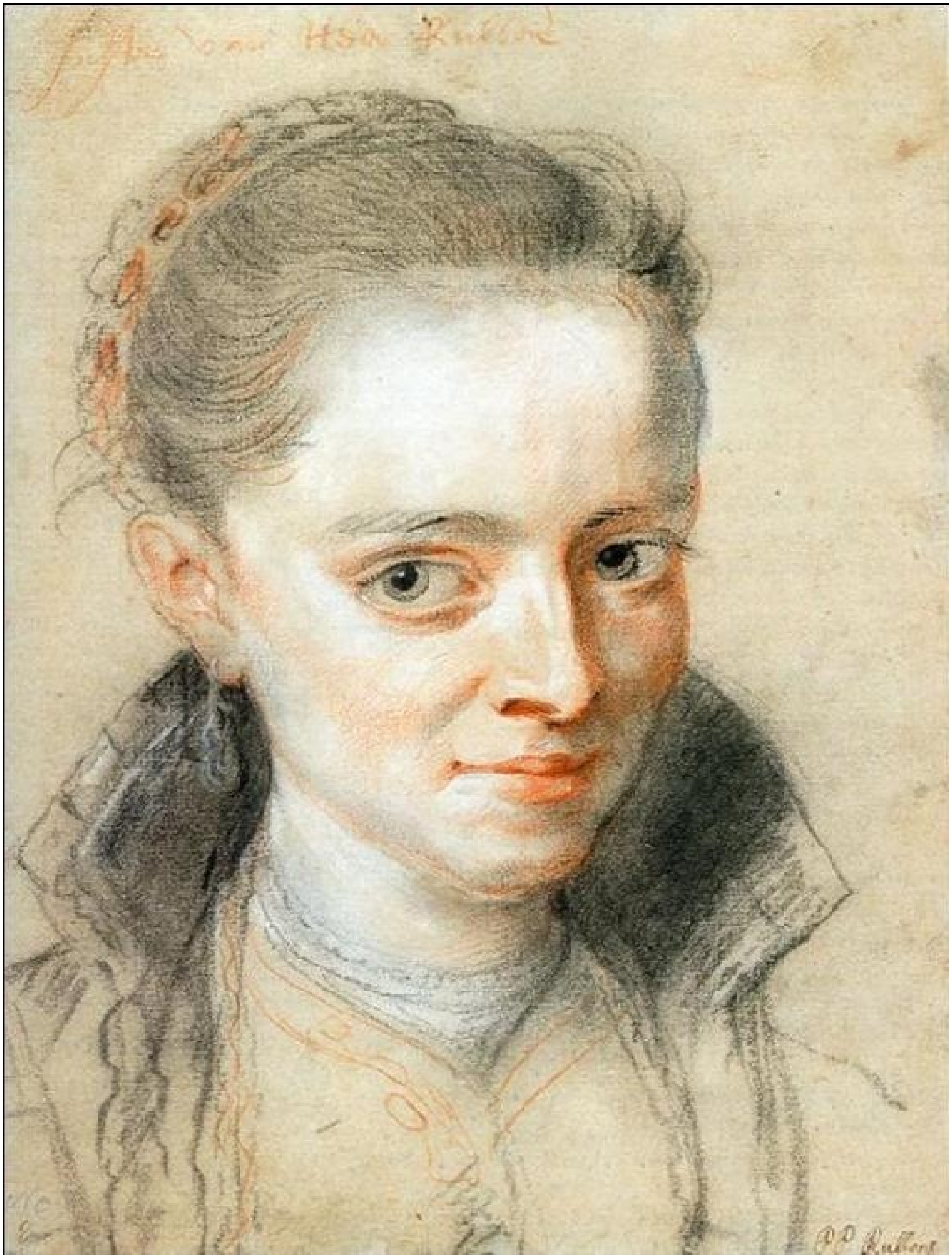
Etude of lion

c.1620
28 x 43 cm
British Museum, London



Susanna Fourment

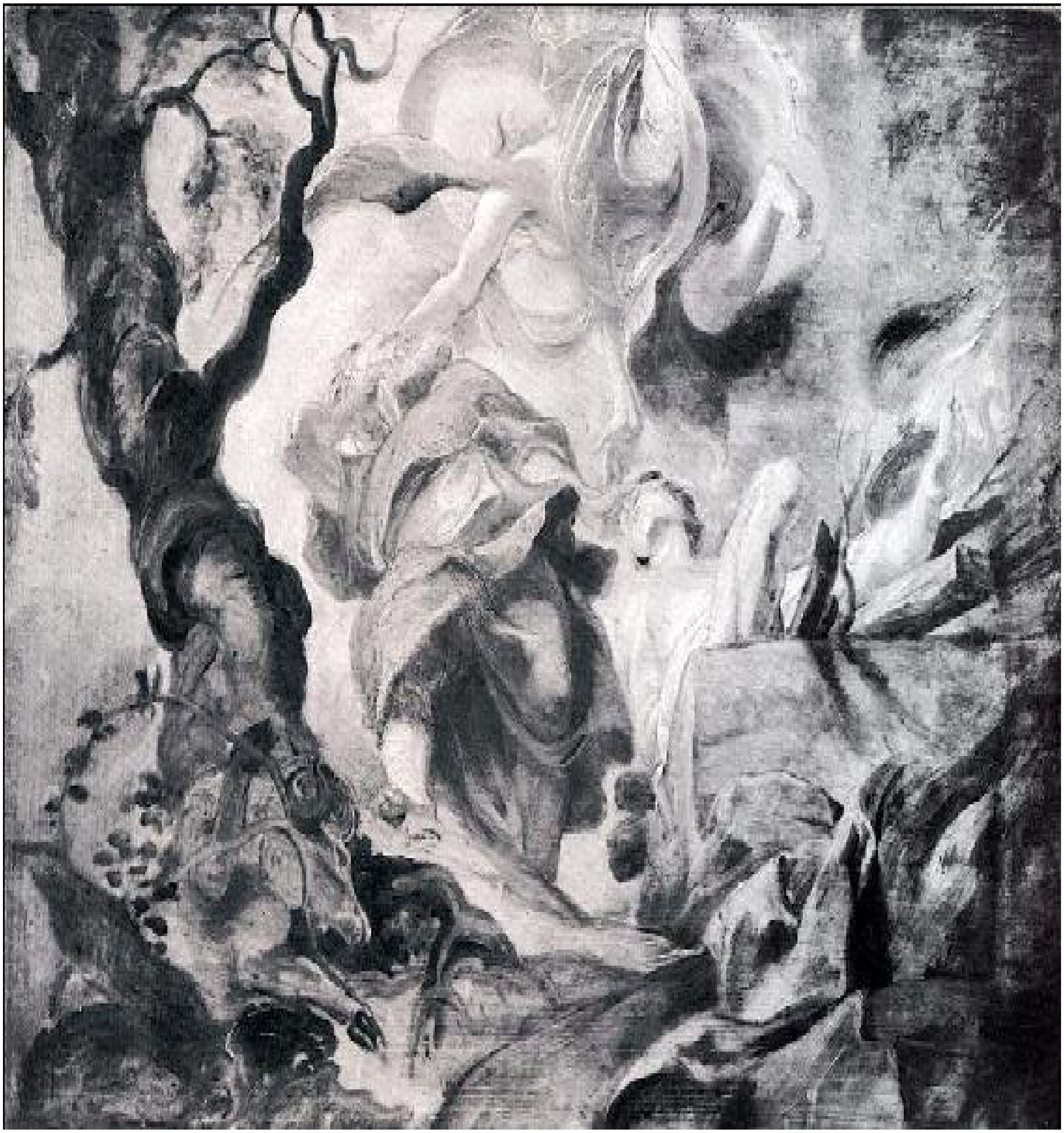
c.1620
34 x 25 cm



P.P. Rubens

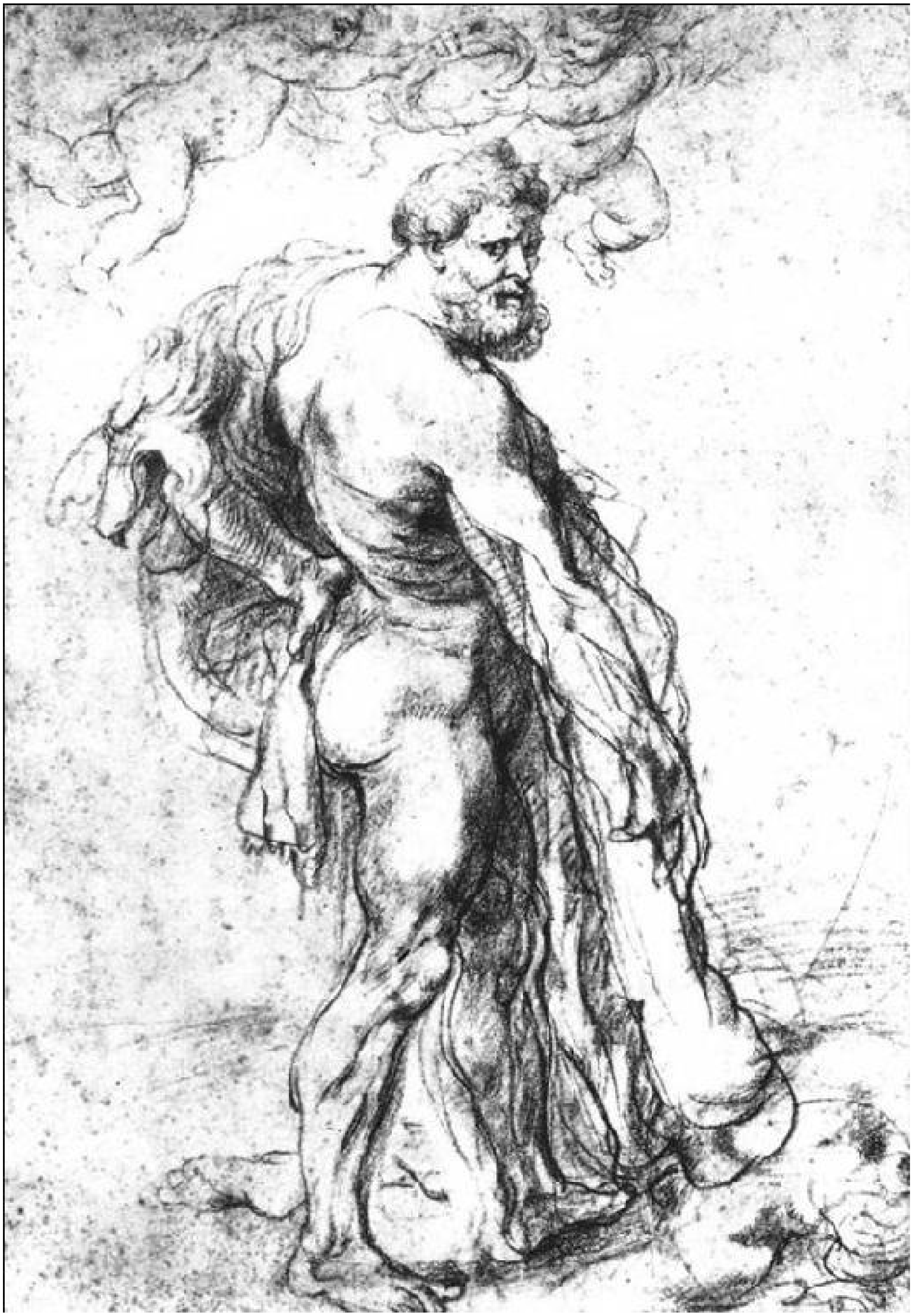
The Sacrifice of Isaac

1620
49.5 x 64.6 cm
Private Collection



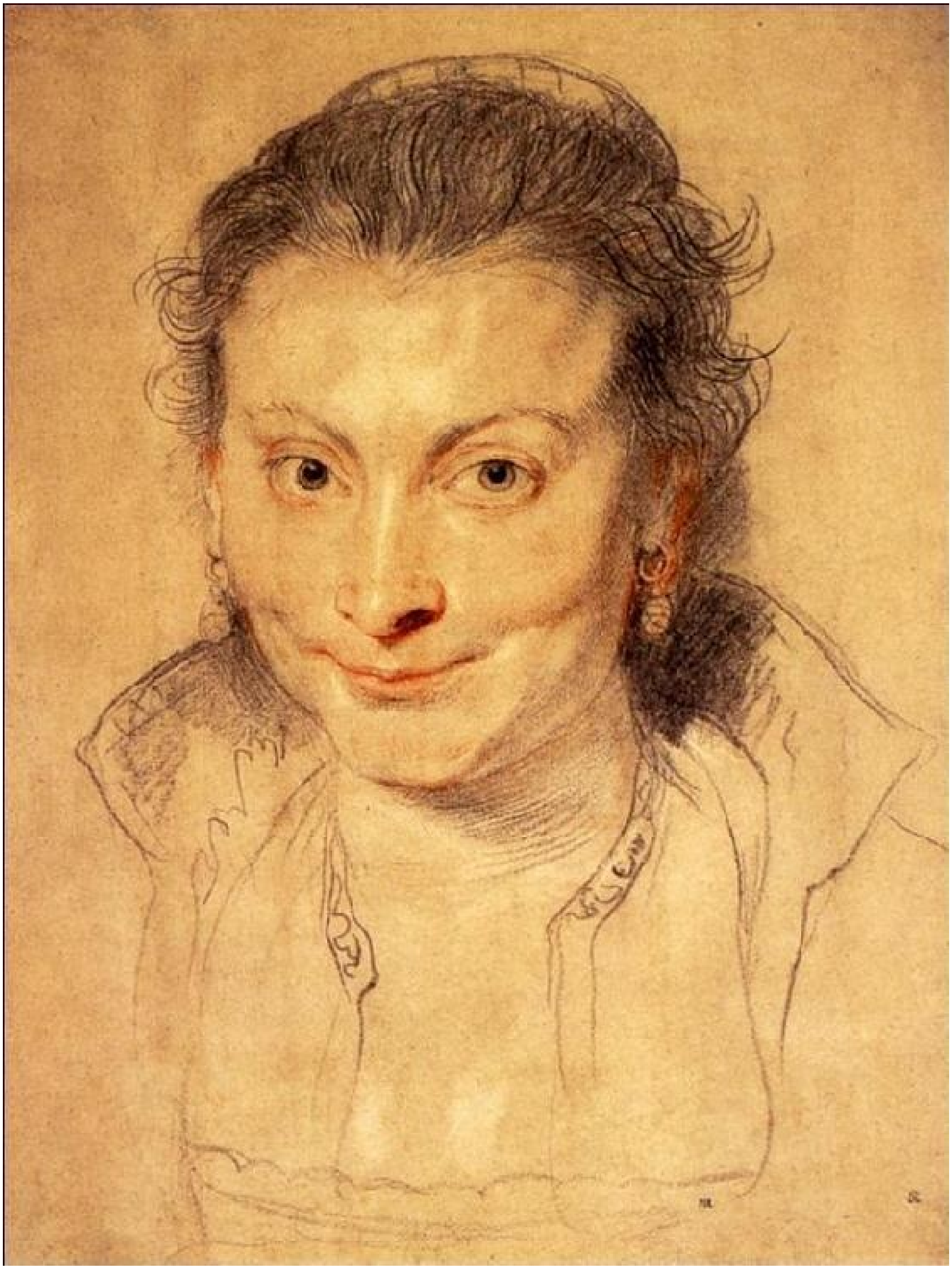
Hercules Crowned by Genii

c.1621
47 x 32 cm
British Museum, London



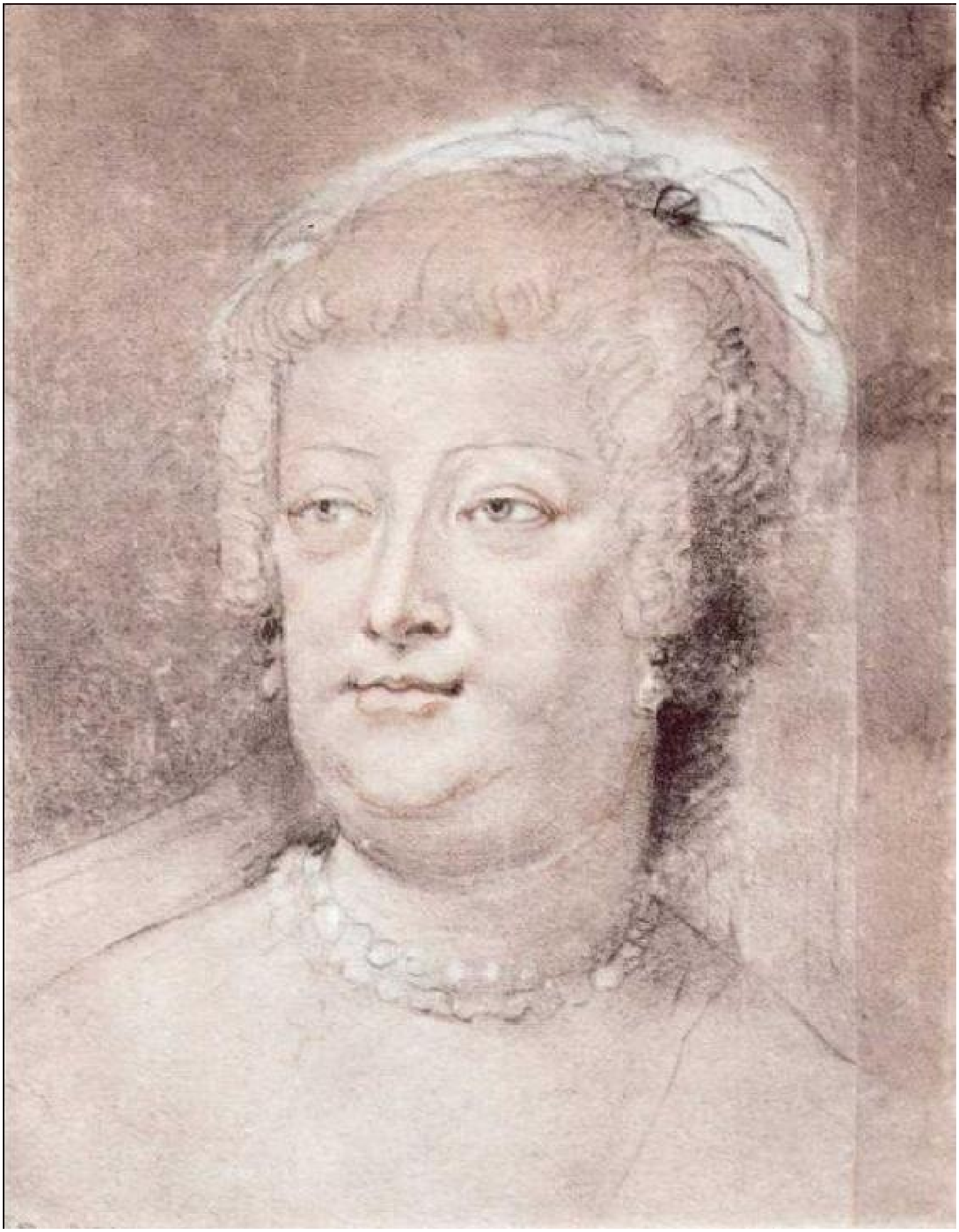
Portrait of Isabella Brandt

c.1622
38.1 x 29.2 cm



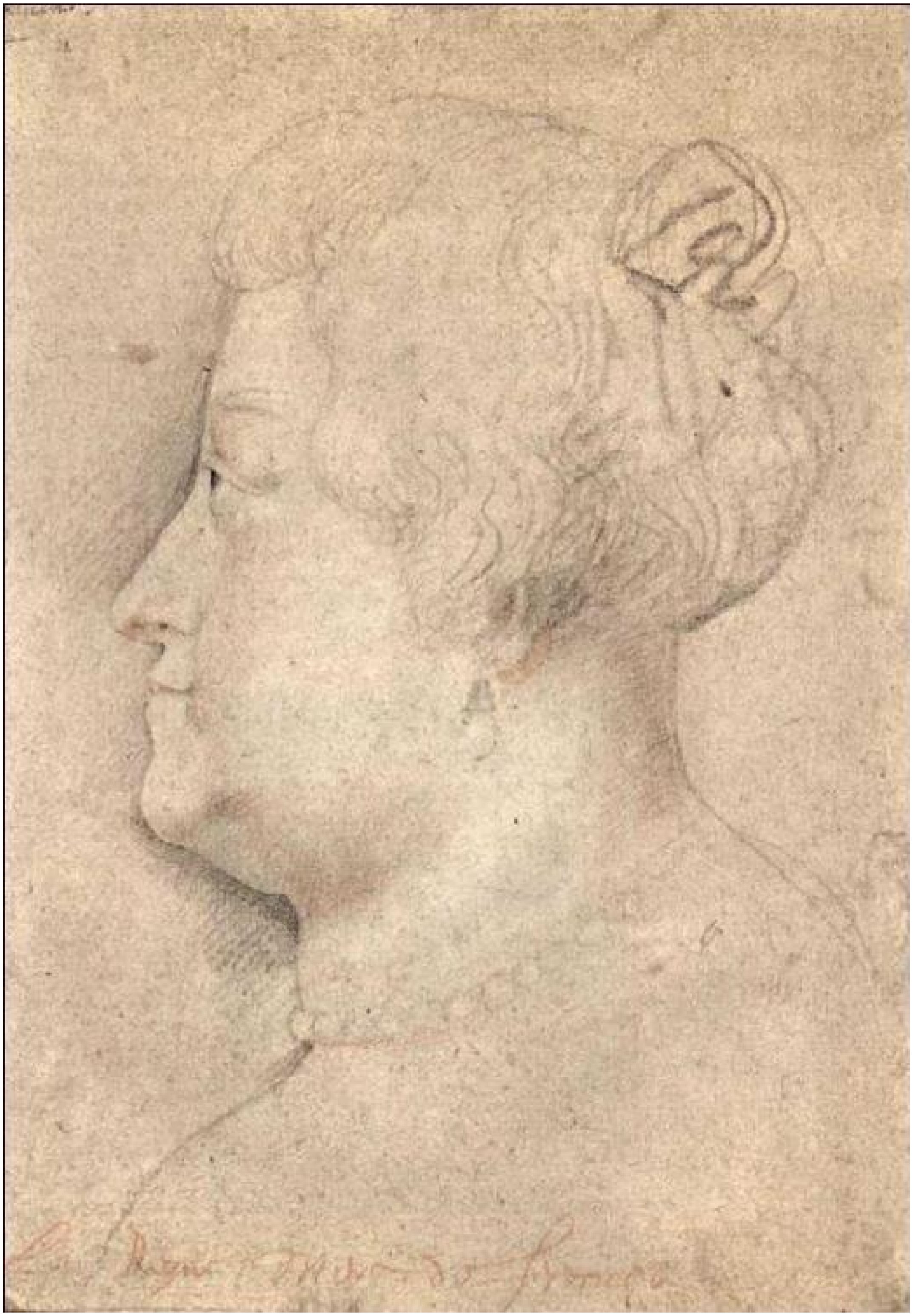
Portrait of Marie de Medici

1622
36 x 28 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



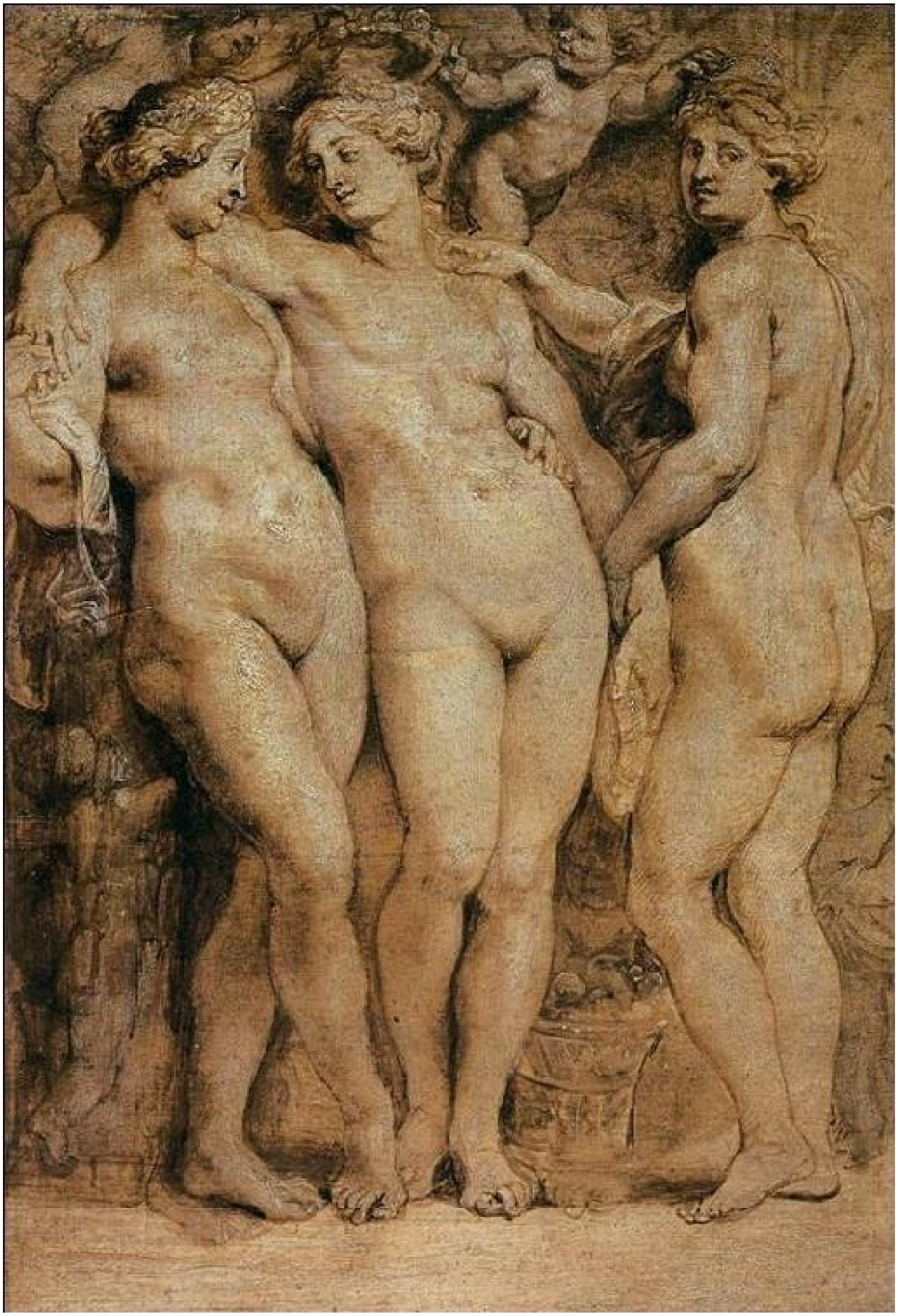
Portrait of Marie de Medici

1622
30 x 21 cm



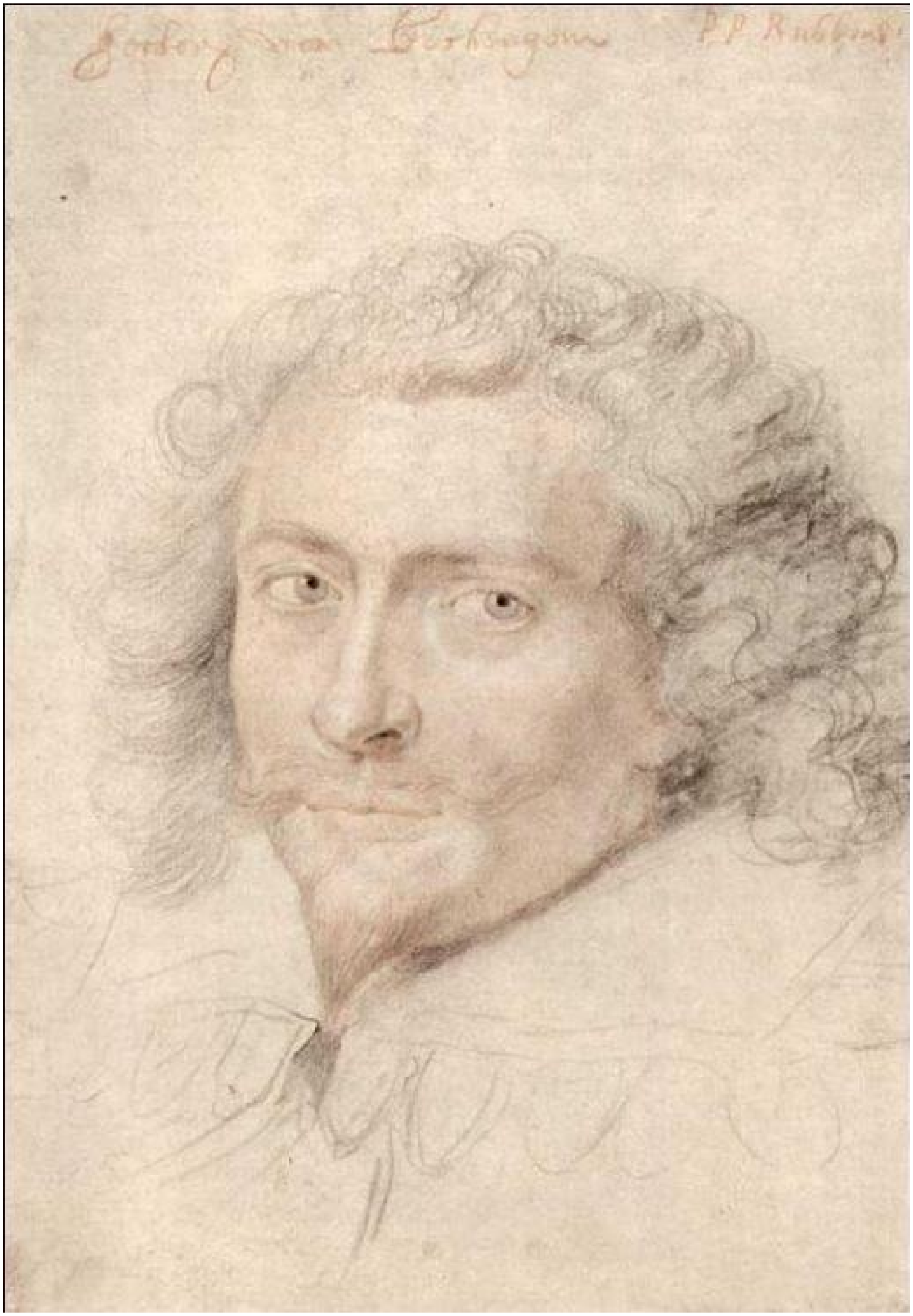
The Three Graces

1623
47 x 34 cm
Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy



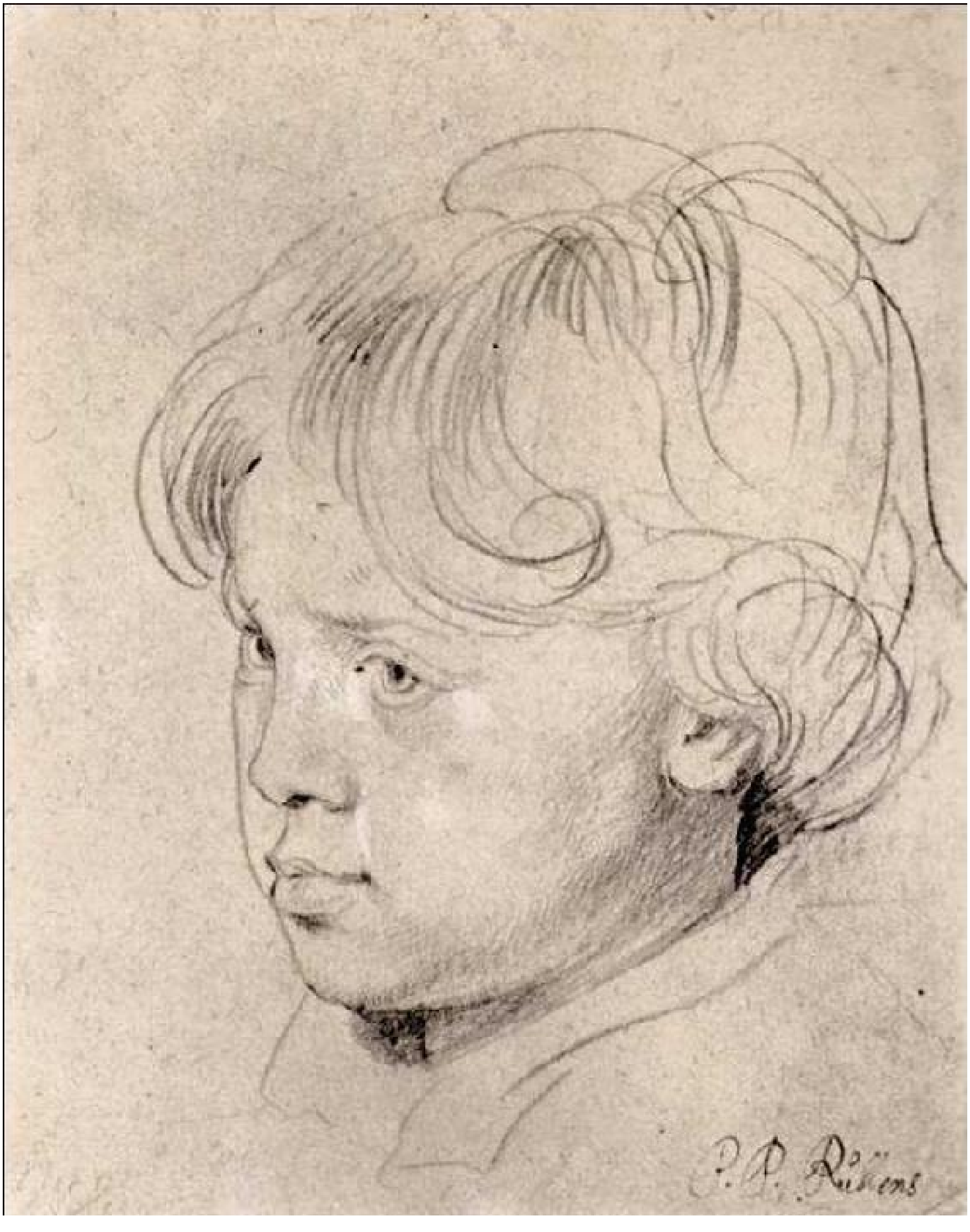
Portrait of George Vilie

c.1625
38 x 26 cm


Hertog van Bockingam
PP Rubbens

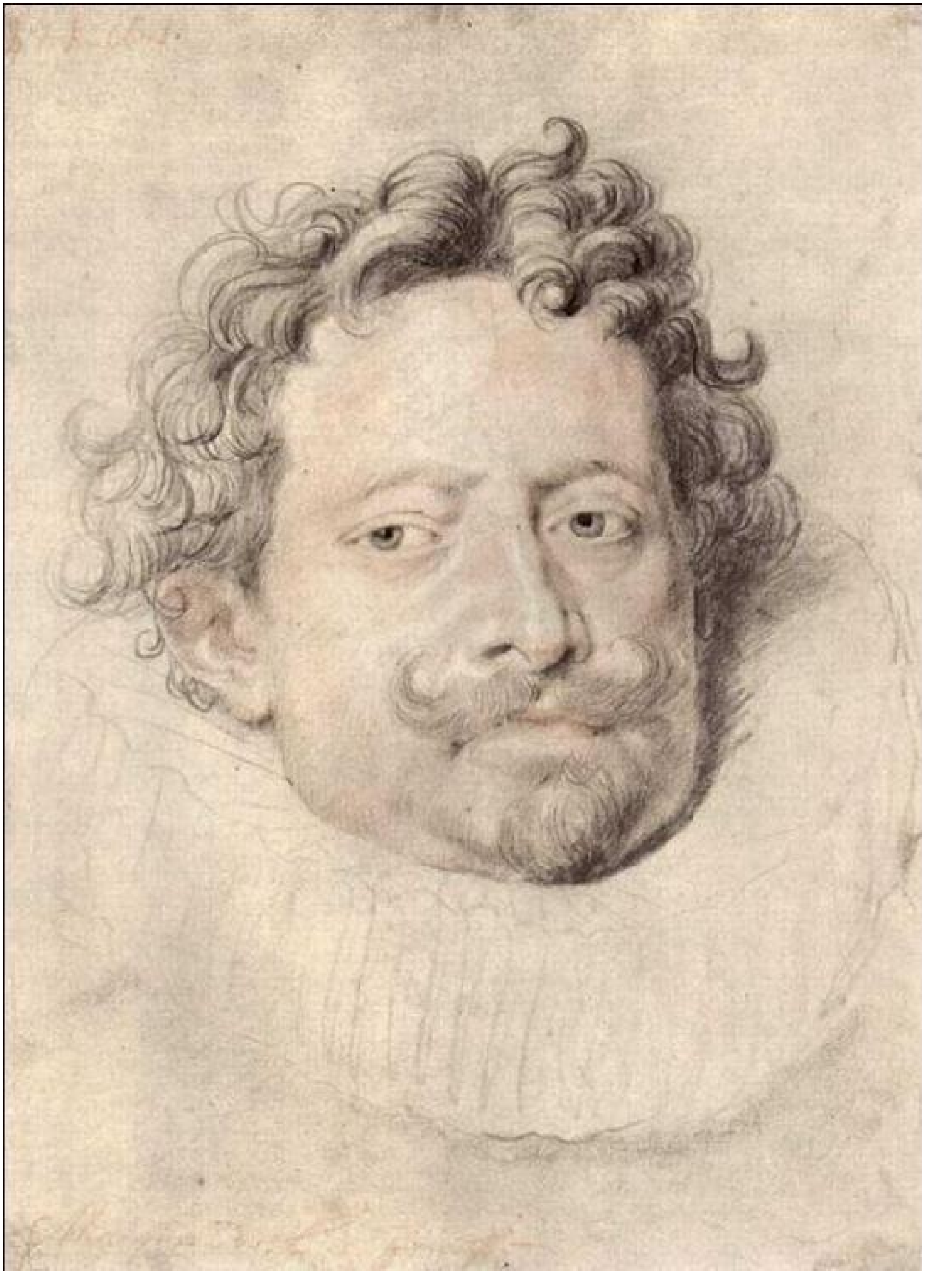
Nicolas Rubens

c.1626
23 x 18 cm


P.P. Rubens

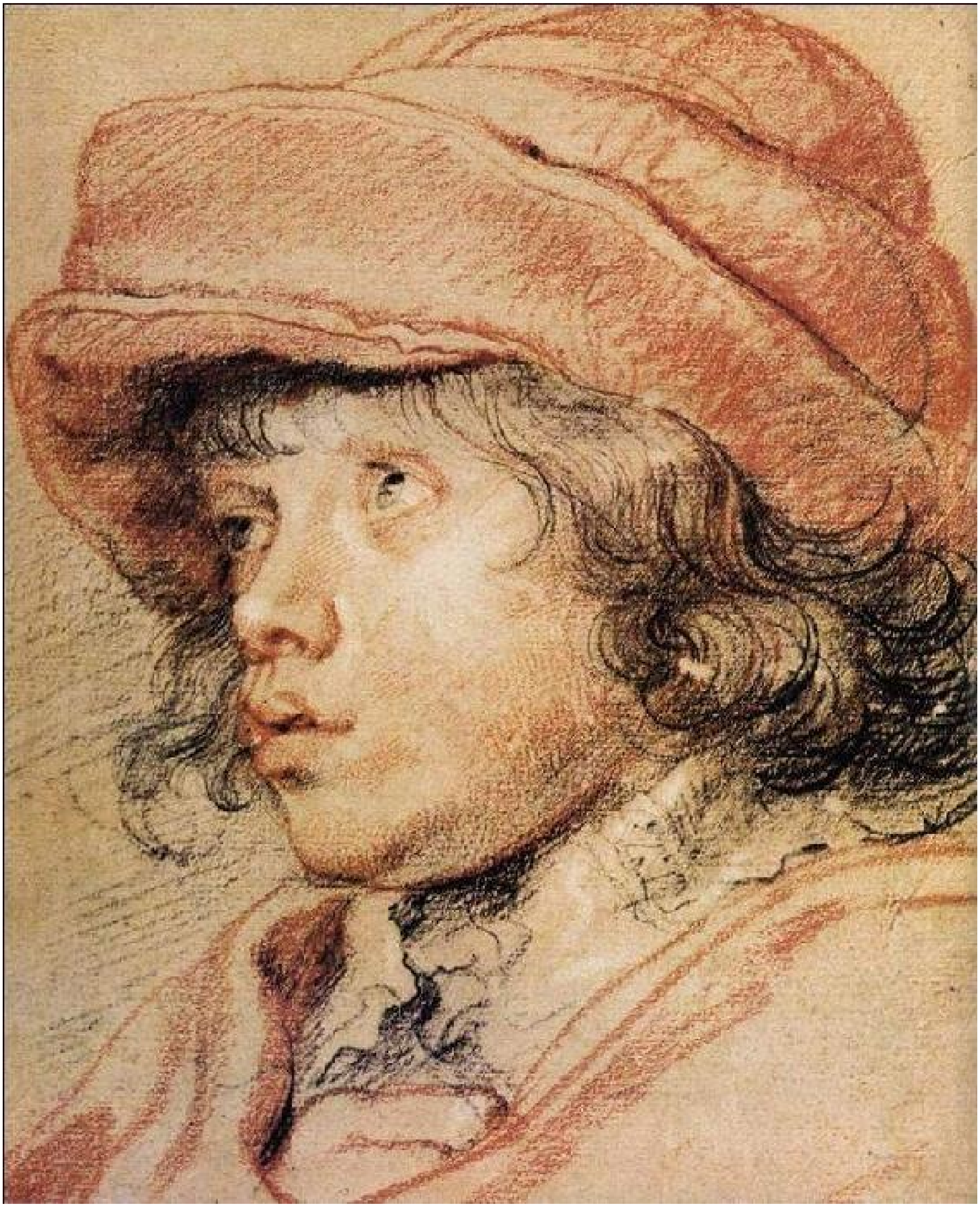
Portrait of Don Diego Messina

c.1627
38 x 27 cm



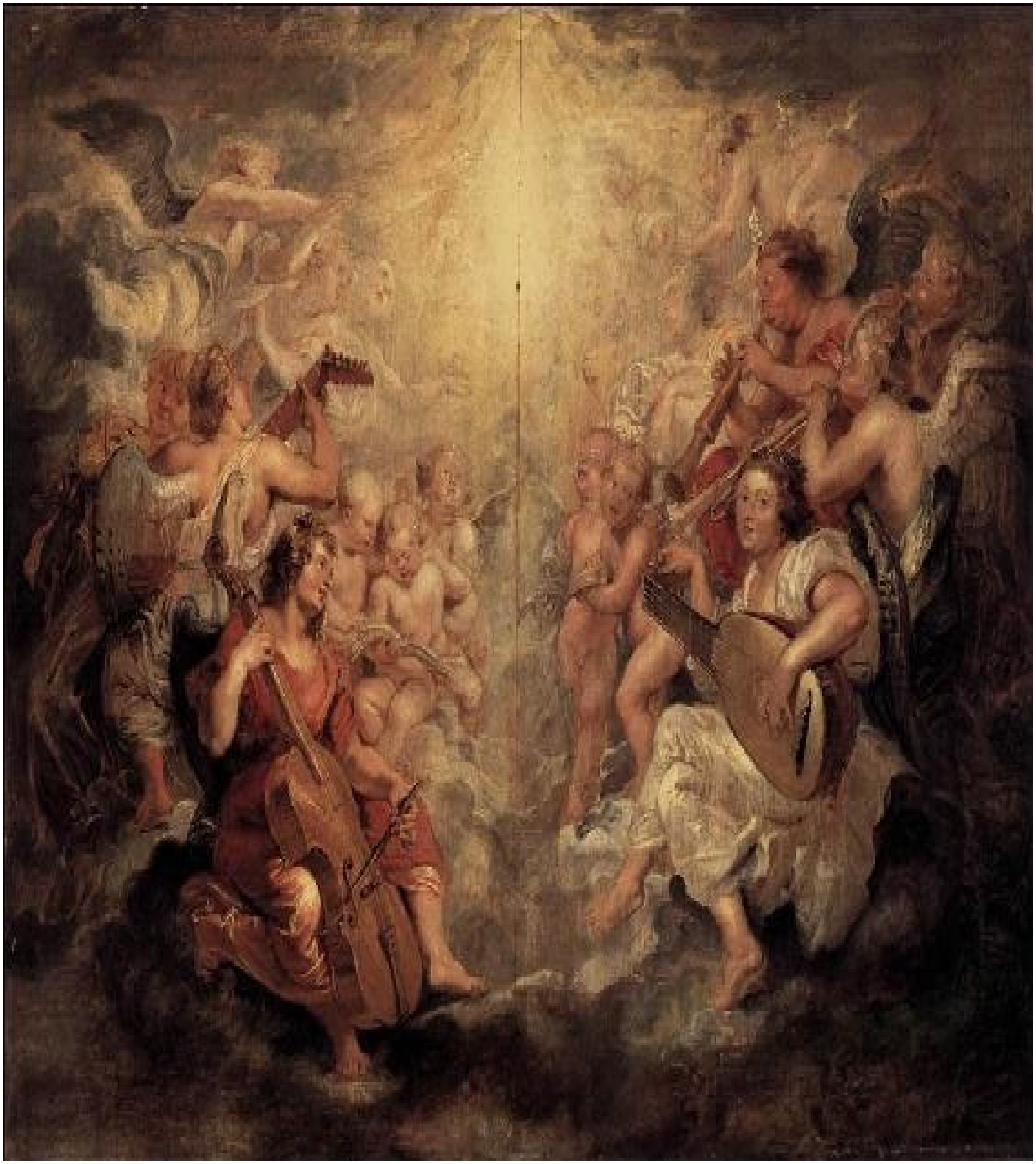
Son Nicolas with a Red Cap

1627
29 x 23 cm



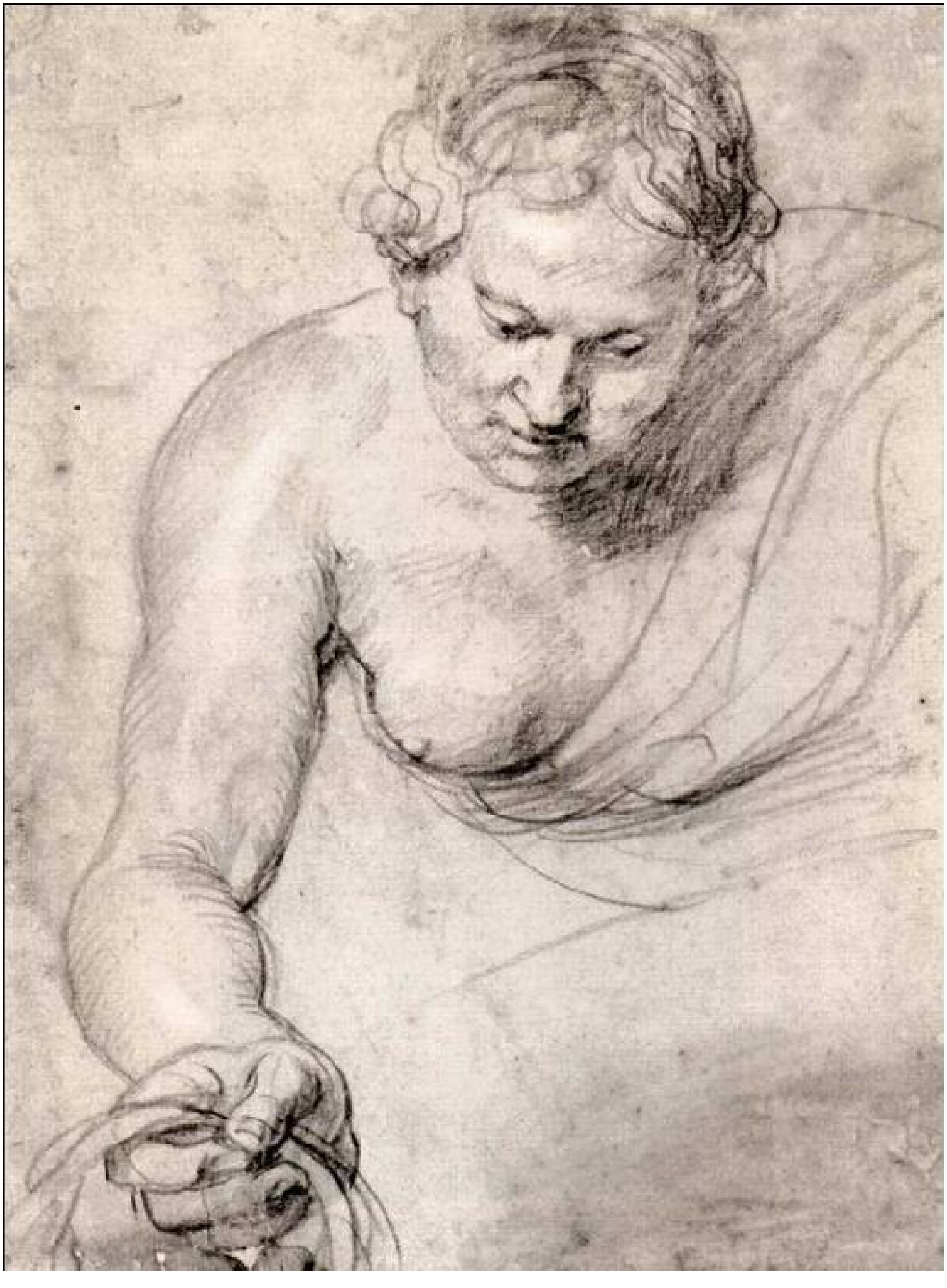
Music Making Angels

c.1628
65 x 83 cm
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, Germany



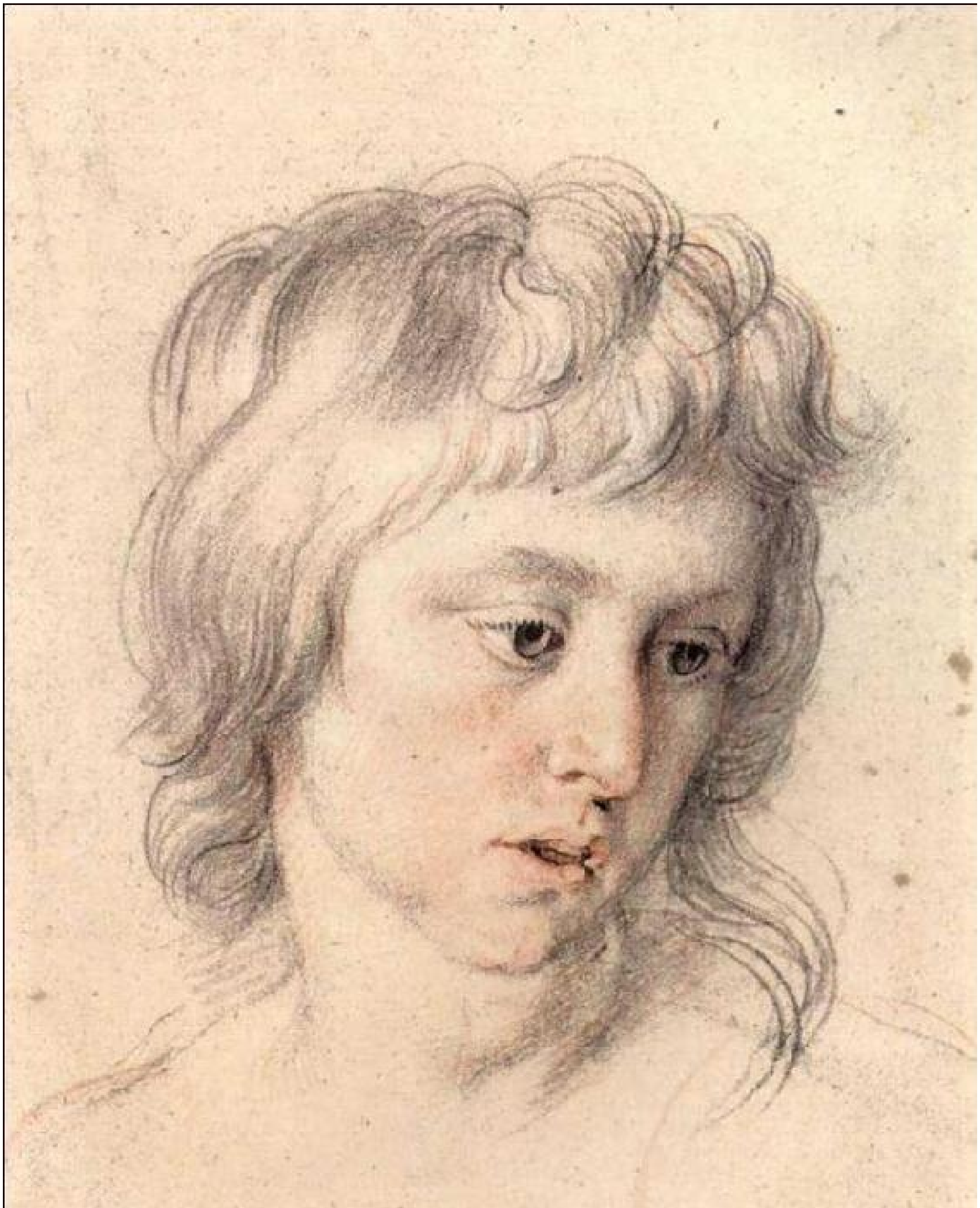
Woman

c.1628
32 x 24 cm



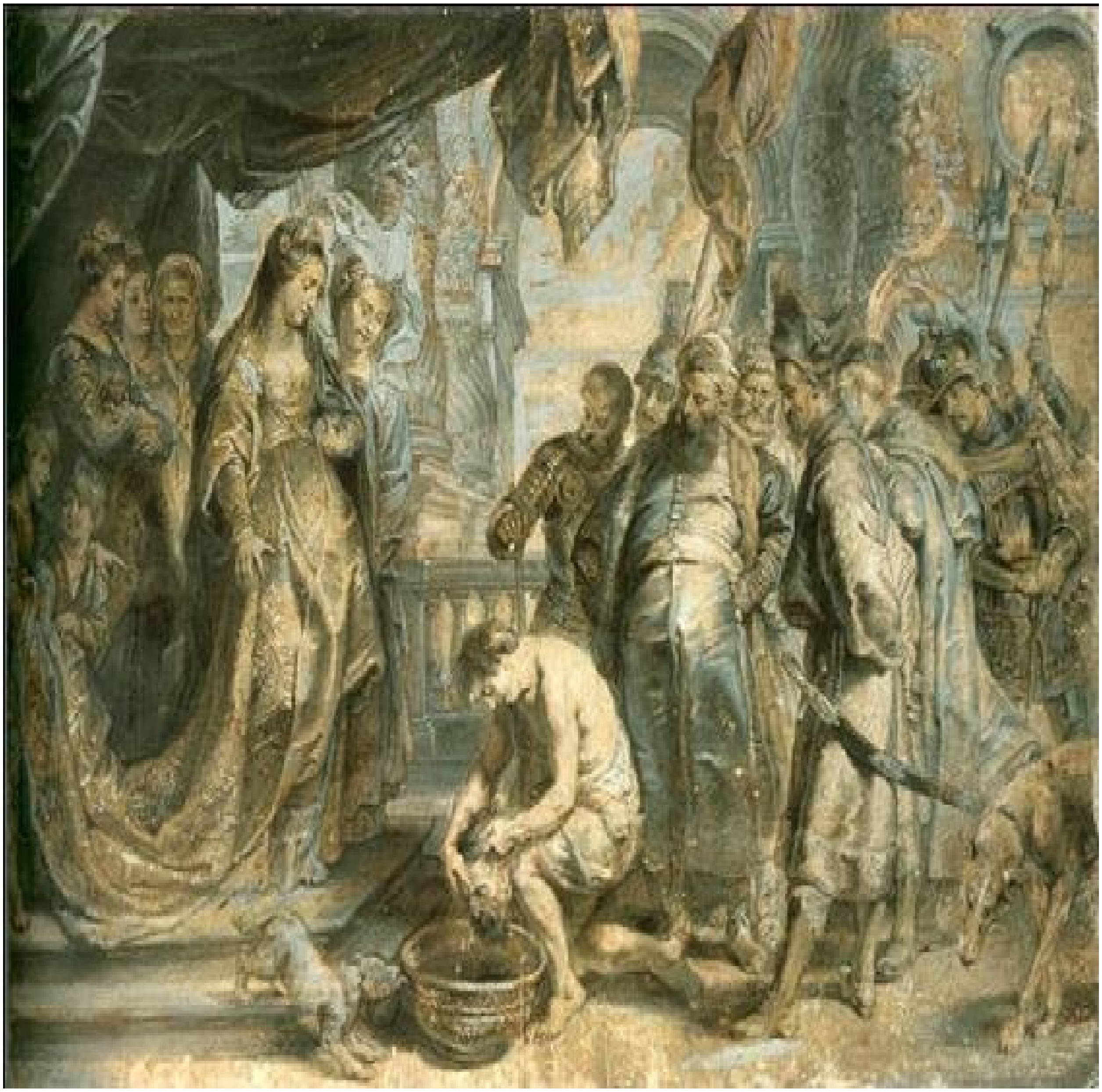
Portrait of boy

c.1630
29 x 22 cm


P. P. Rubbens

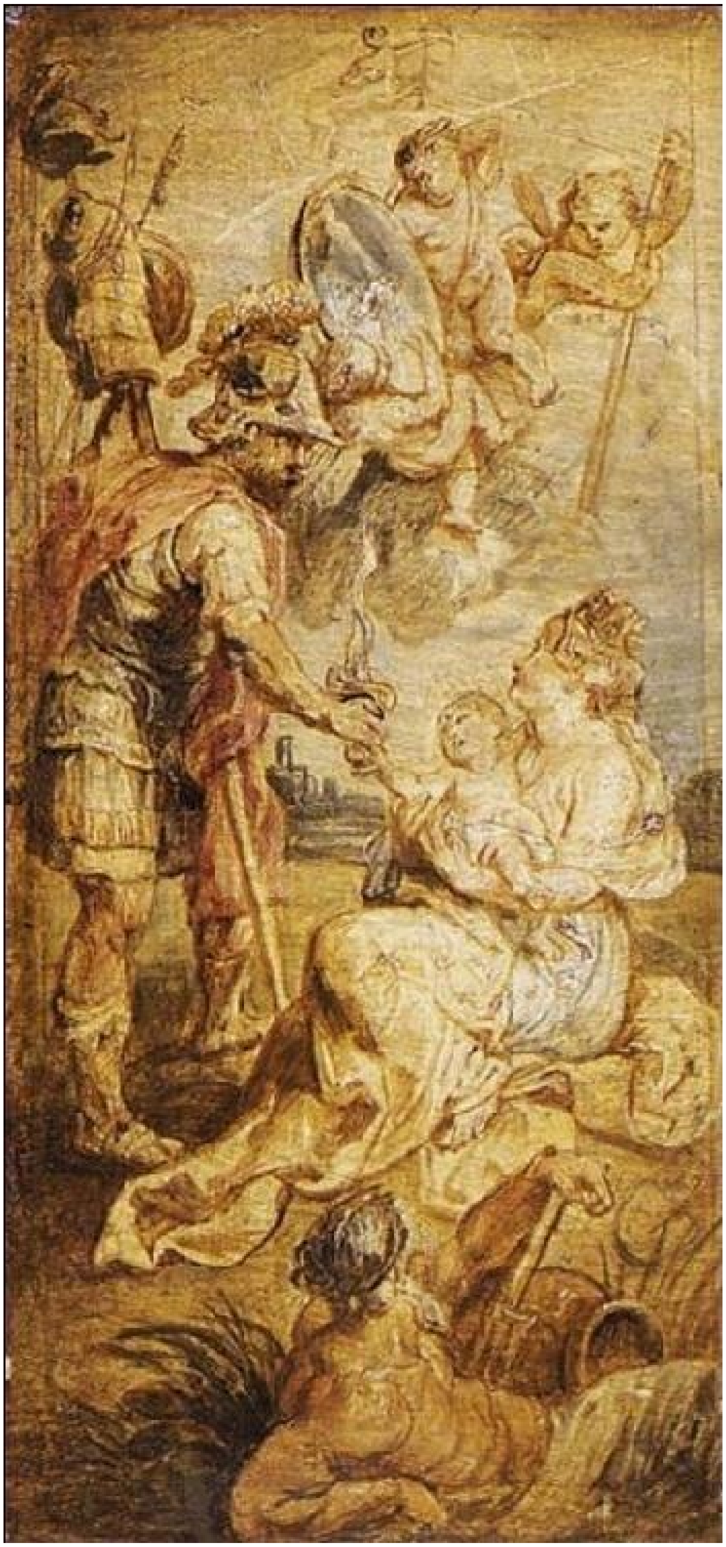
Queen Tomyris with the Head of Cyrus

c.1630
39 x 59 cm



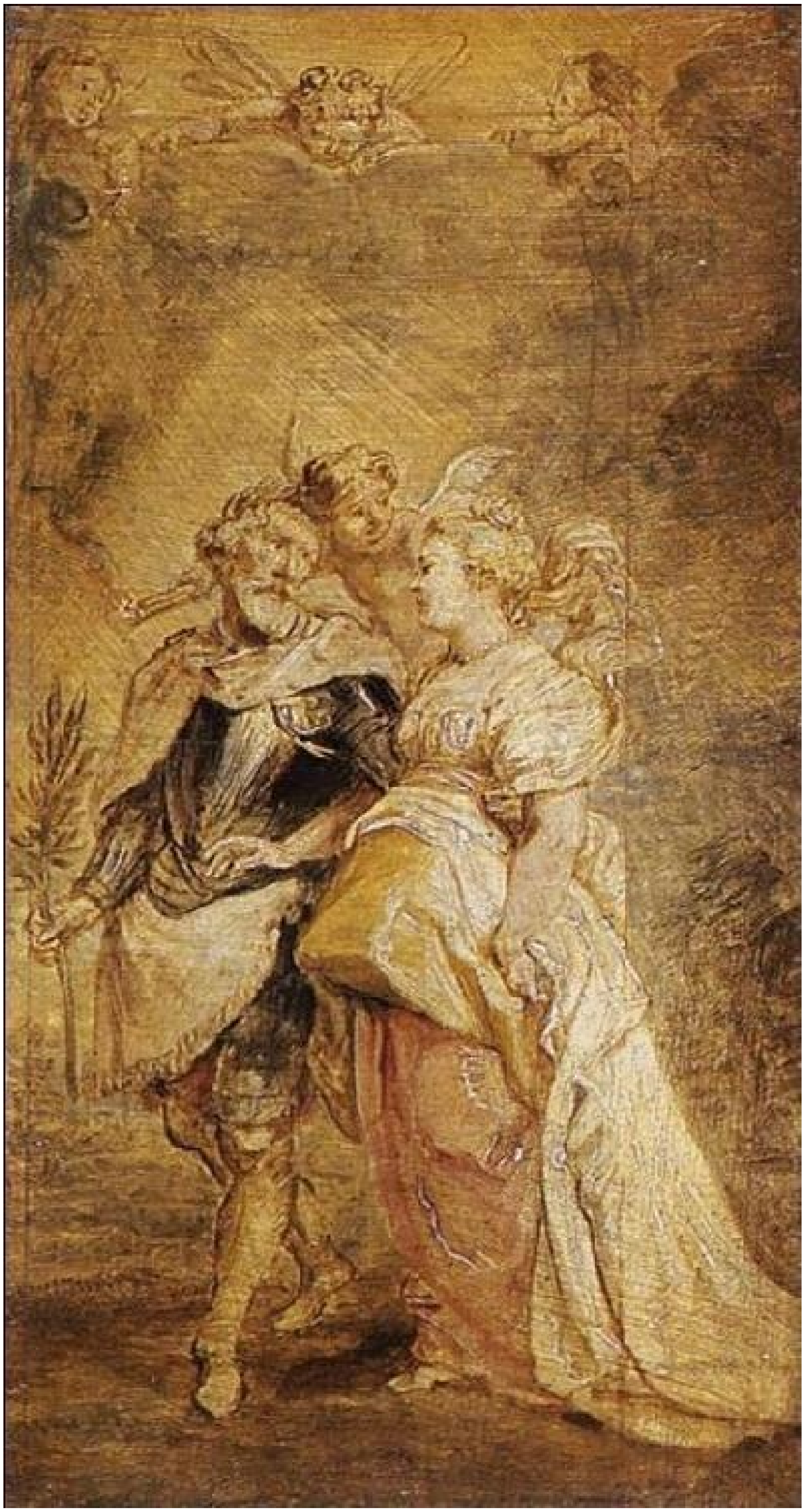
The Birth of Henri IV of France

1630
22 x 10 cm
The Wallace Collection, London



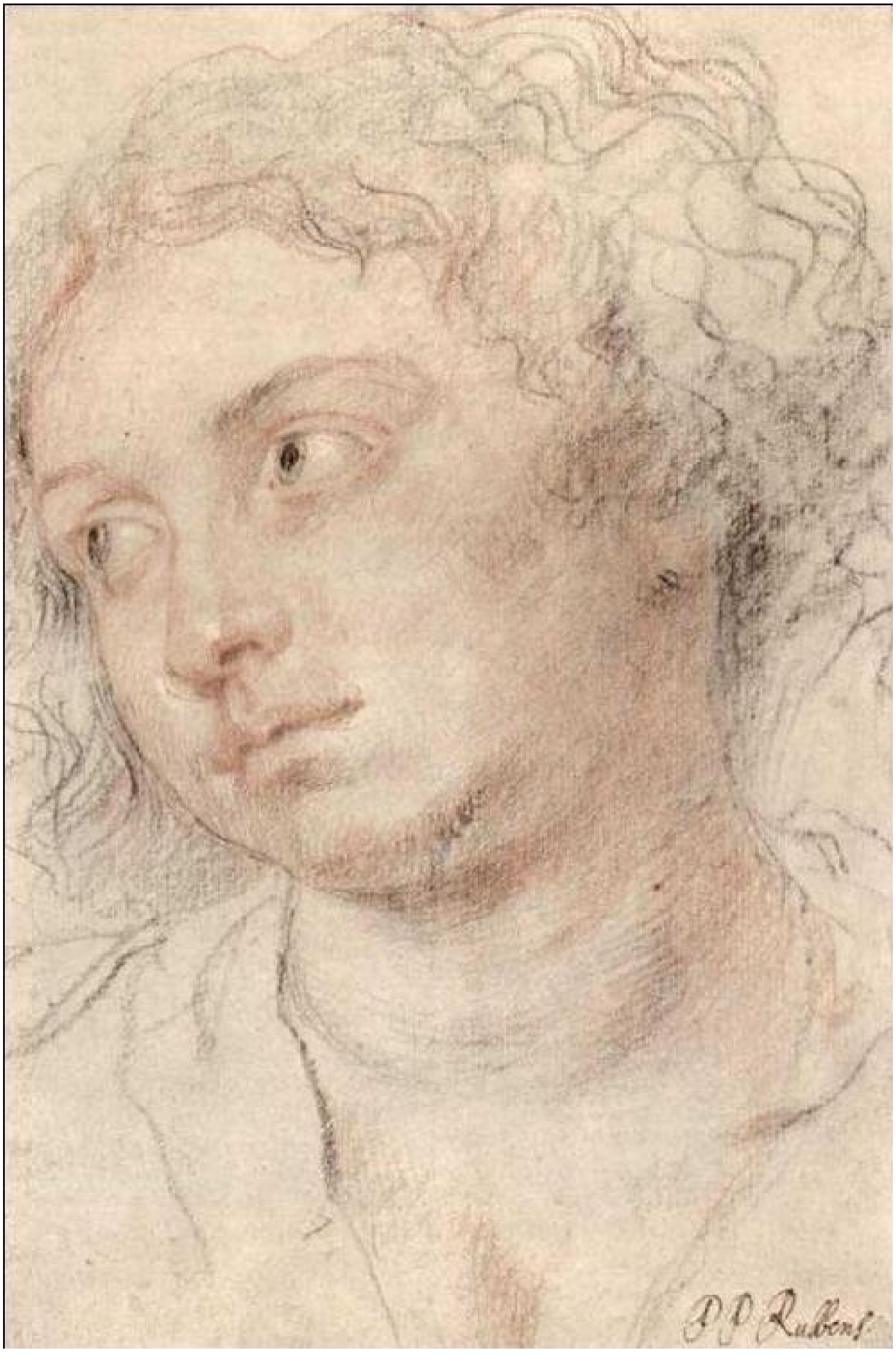
The Marriage of Henri IV of France and Marie de Médici

1630
23 x 13 cm
The Wallace Collection, London



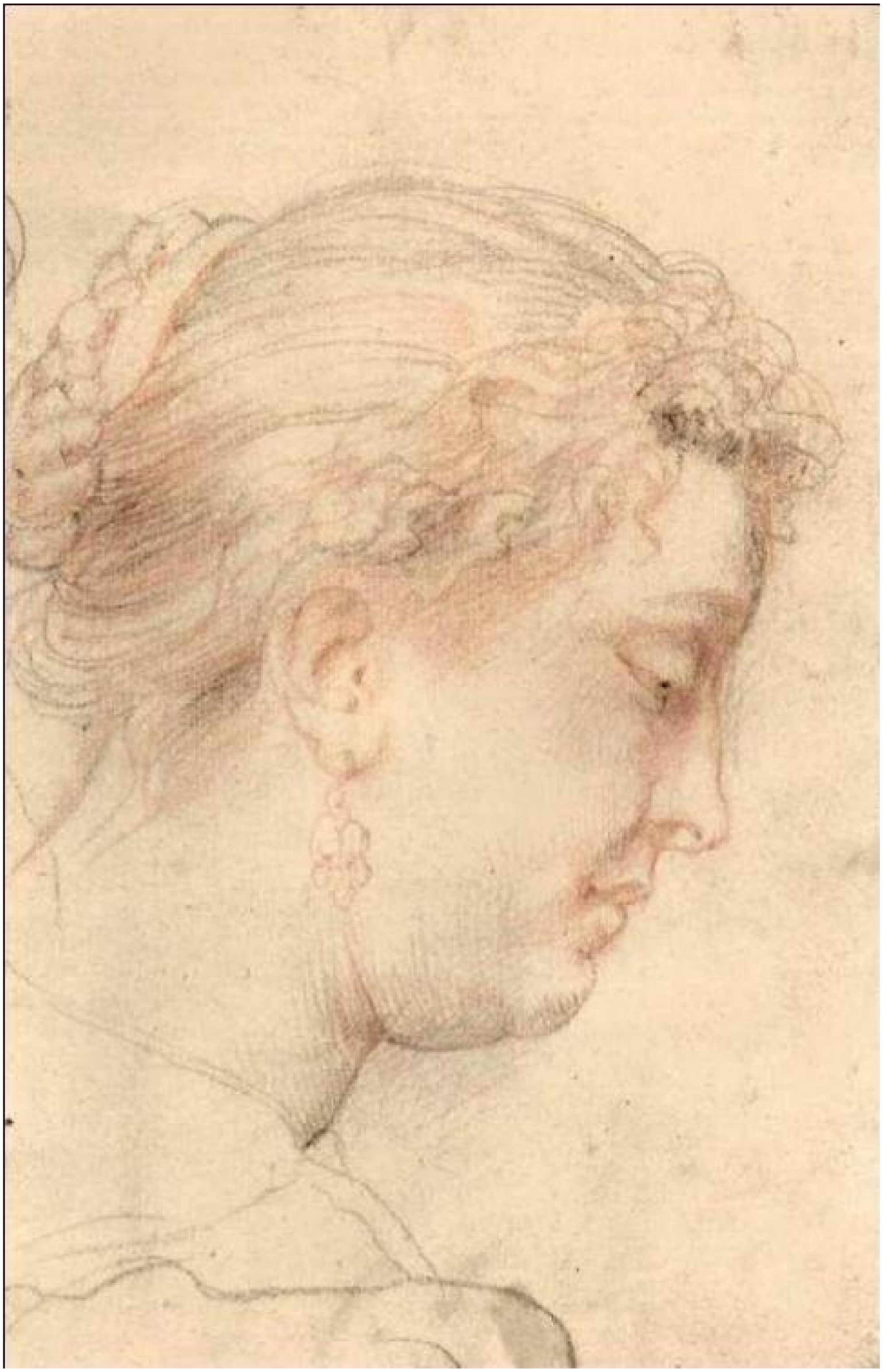
Head of woman

c.1632
25 x 17 cm


P.P. Rubens

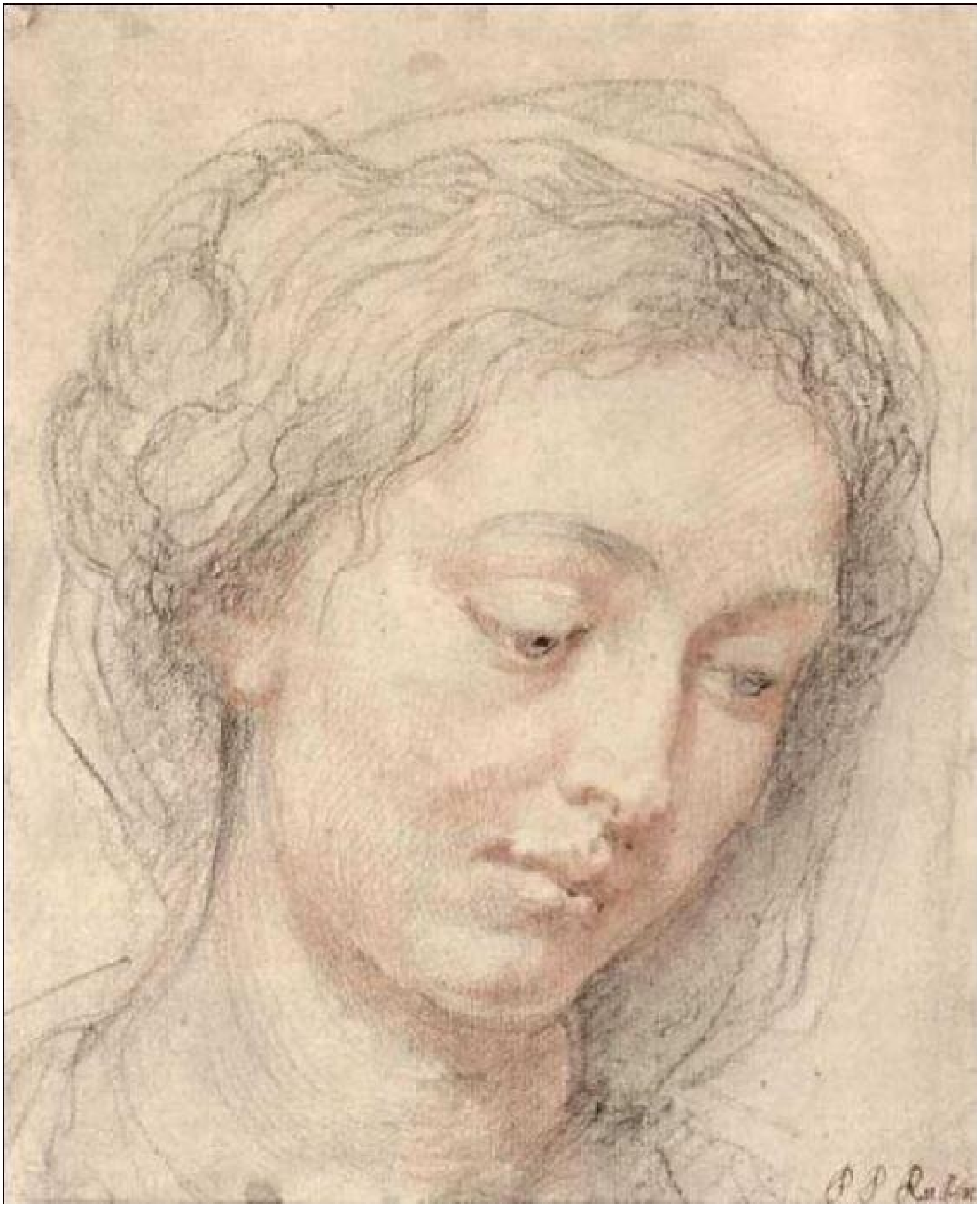
Head of woman

c.1632
24 x 16 cm



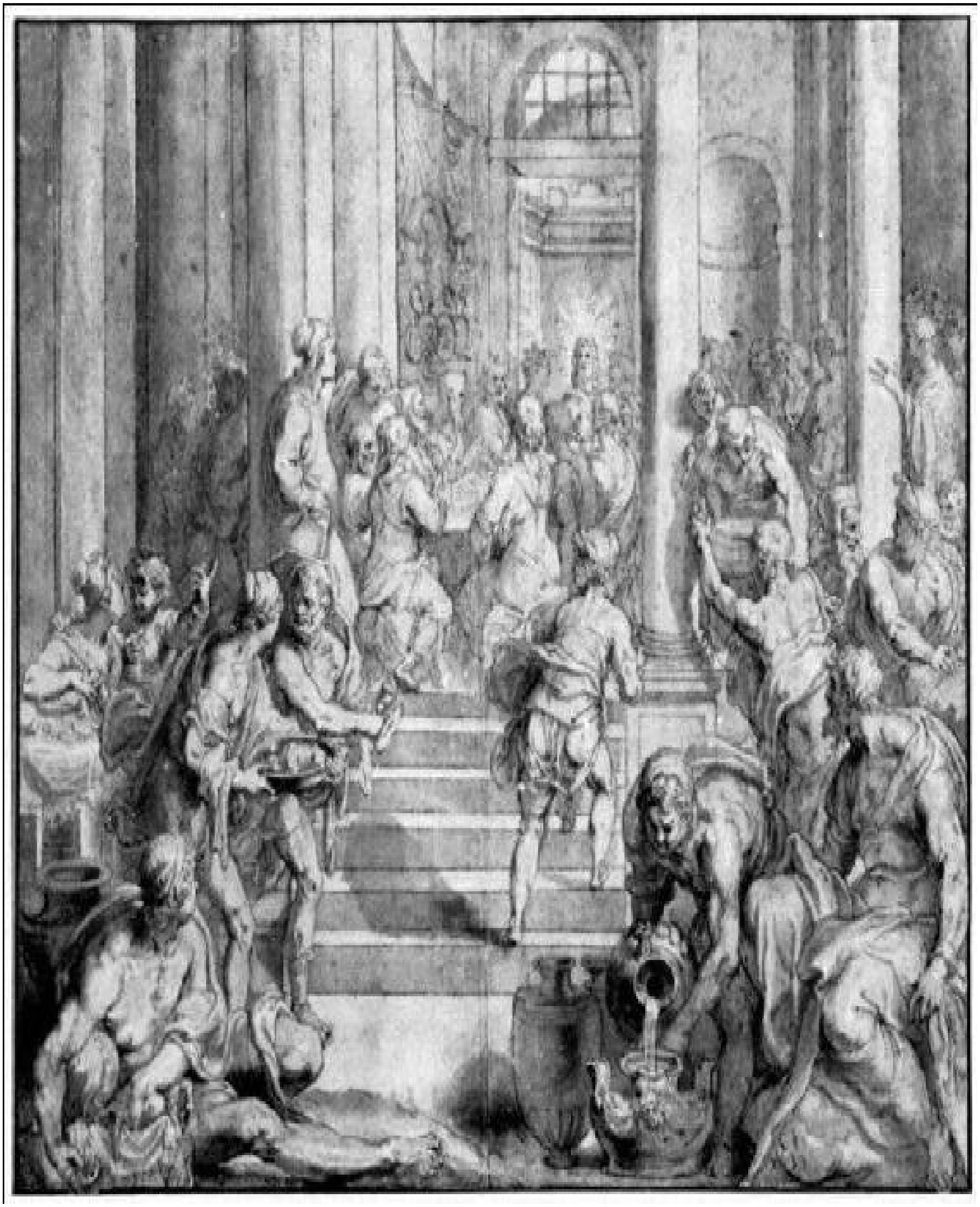
Head of woman

c.1632
19 x 17 cm


P P Rubn

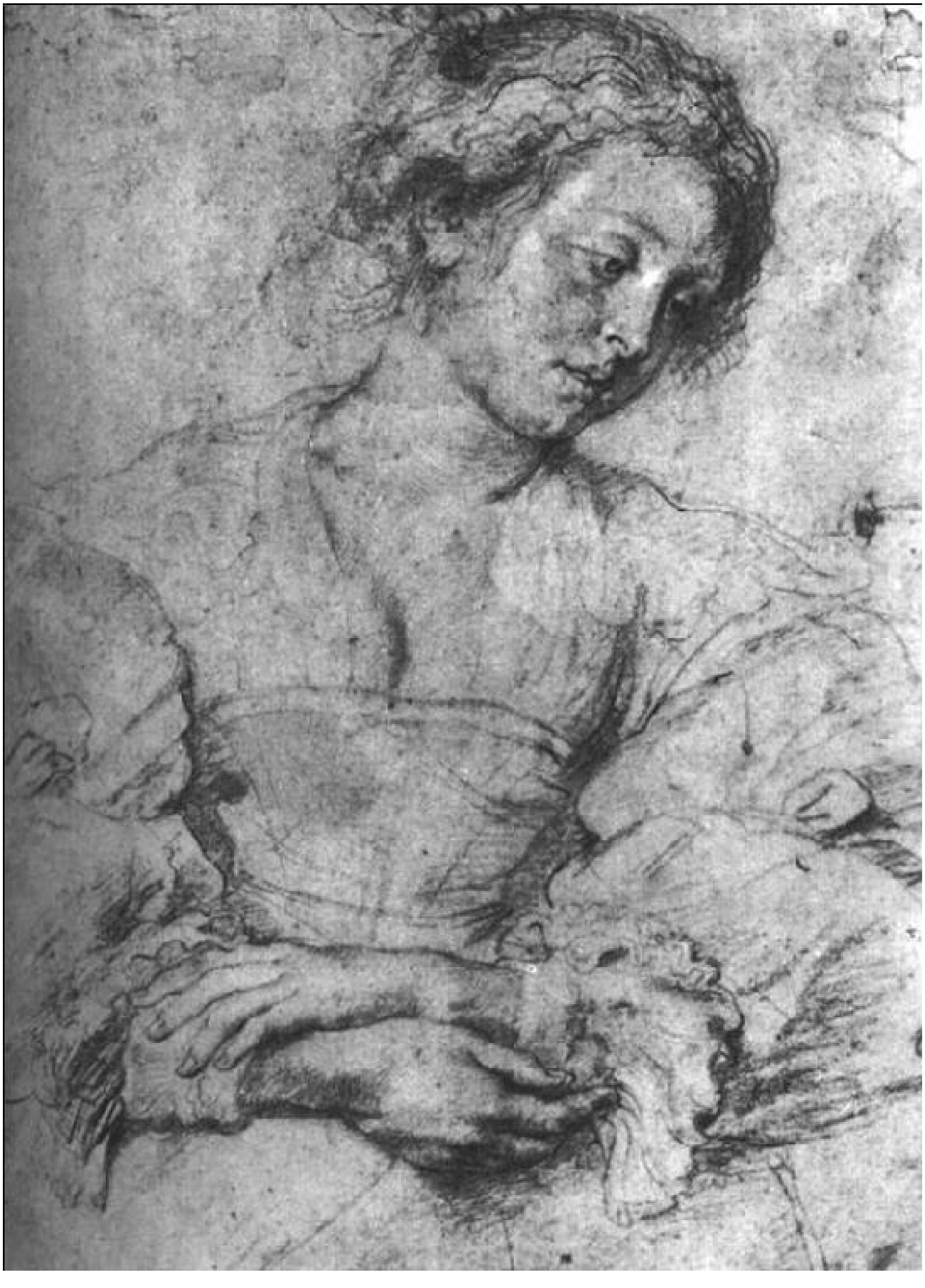
Last Supper

c.1635
33 x 38 cm



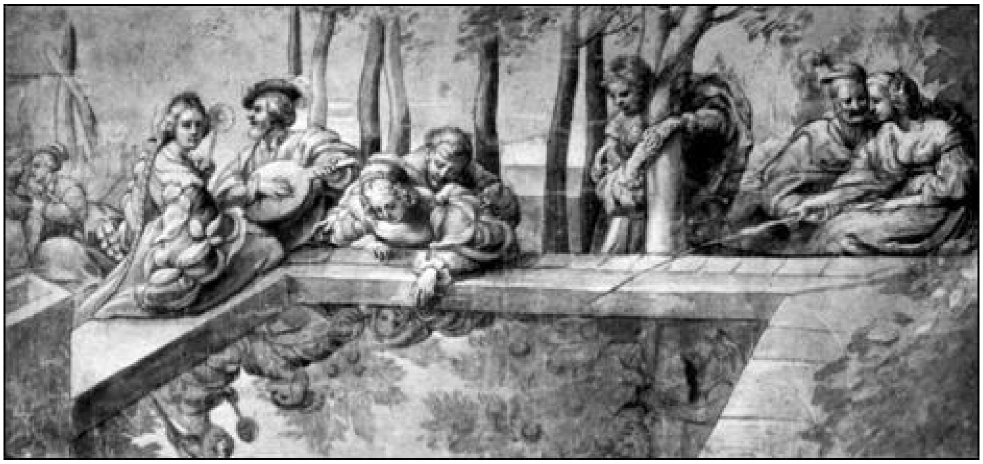
Portrait of a Young Woman

1635
Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



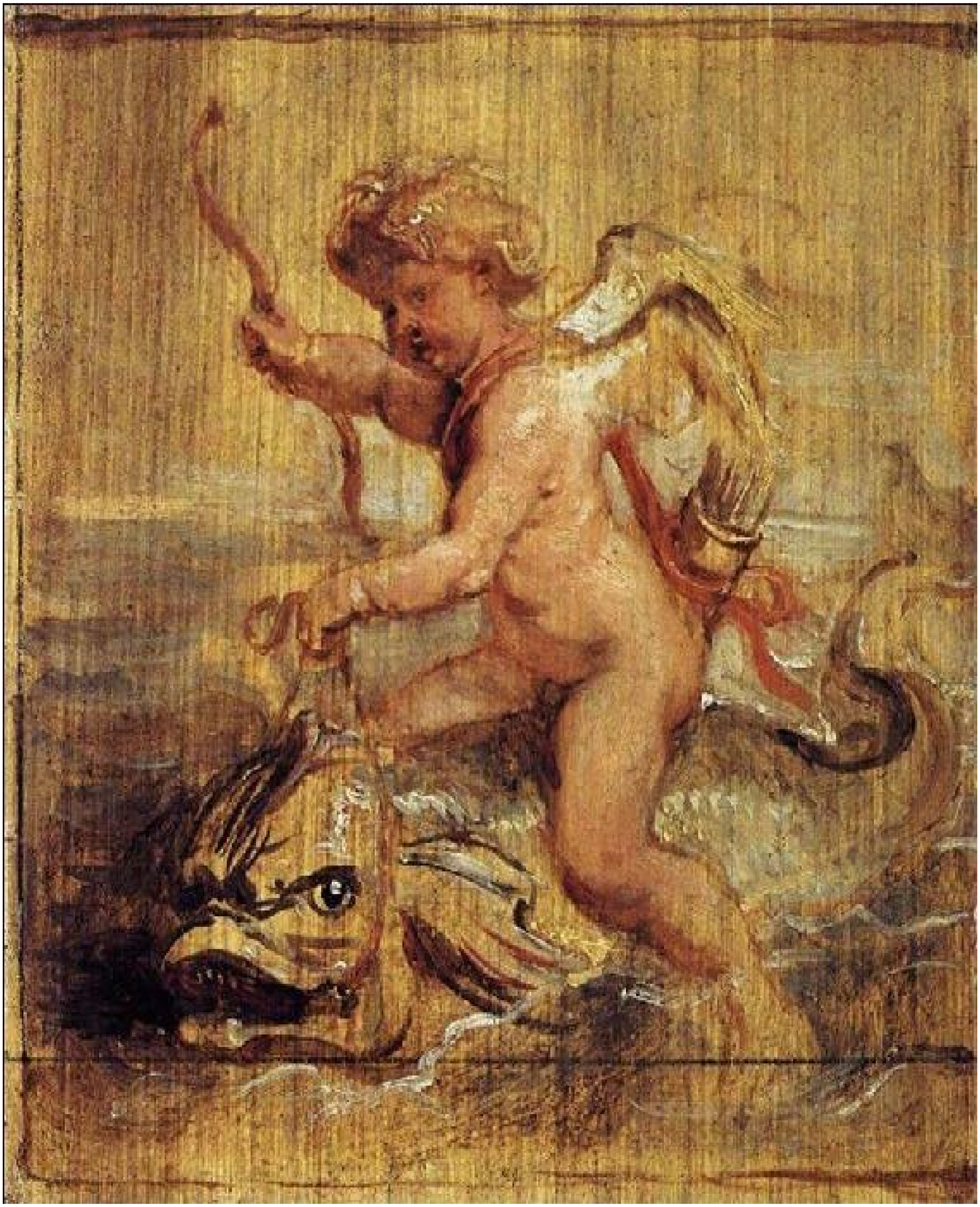
The Society near Fountain

c.1635
21 x 44 cm



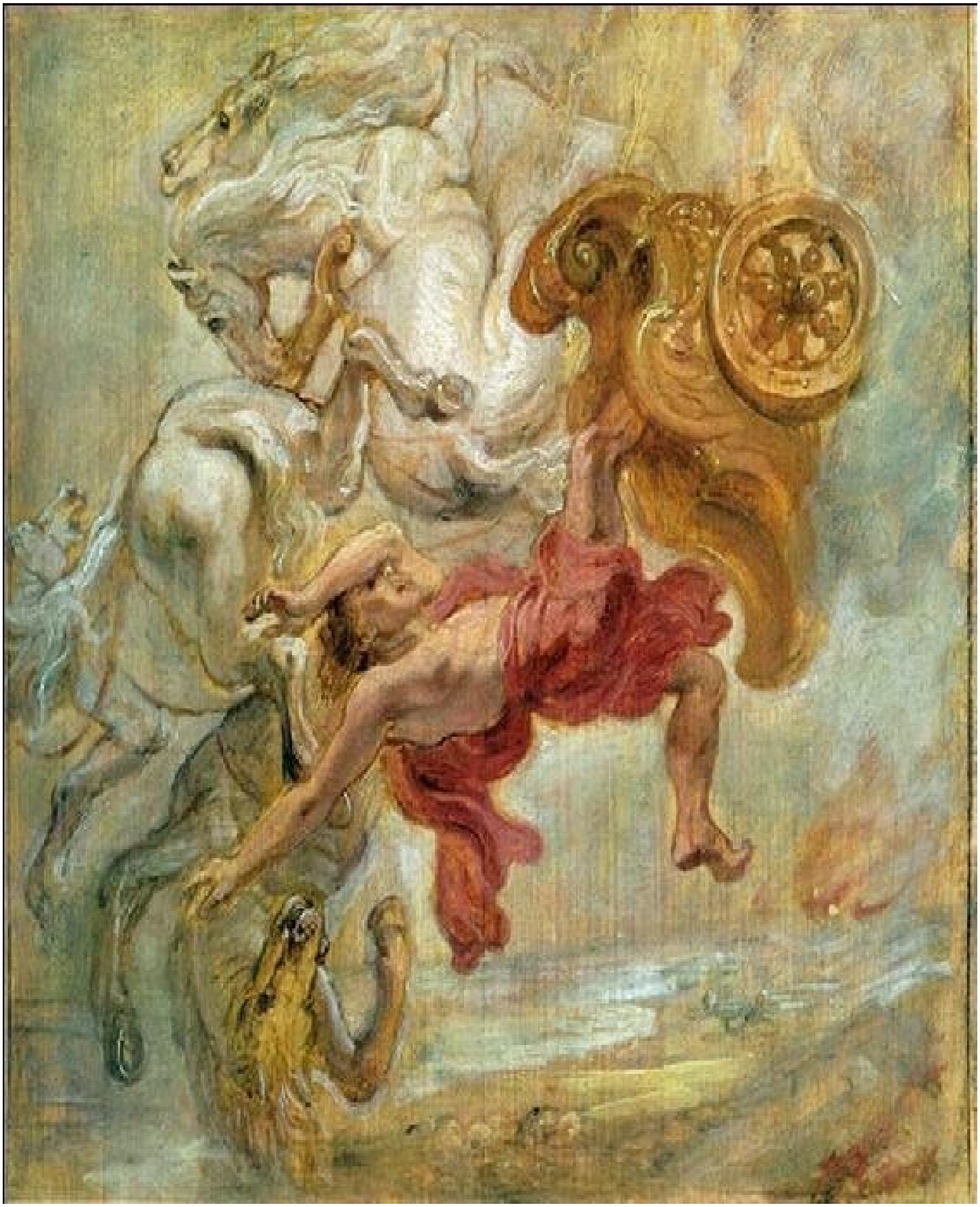
Cupid Riding a Dolphin

1636
14.5 x 13.5 cm
Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium



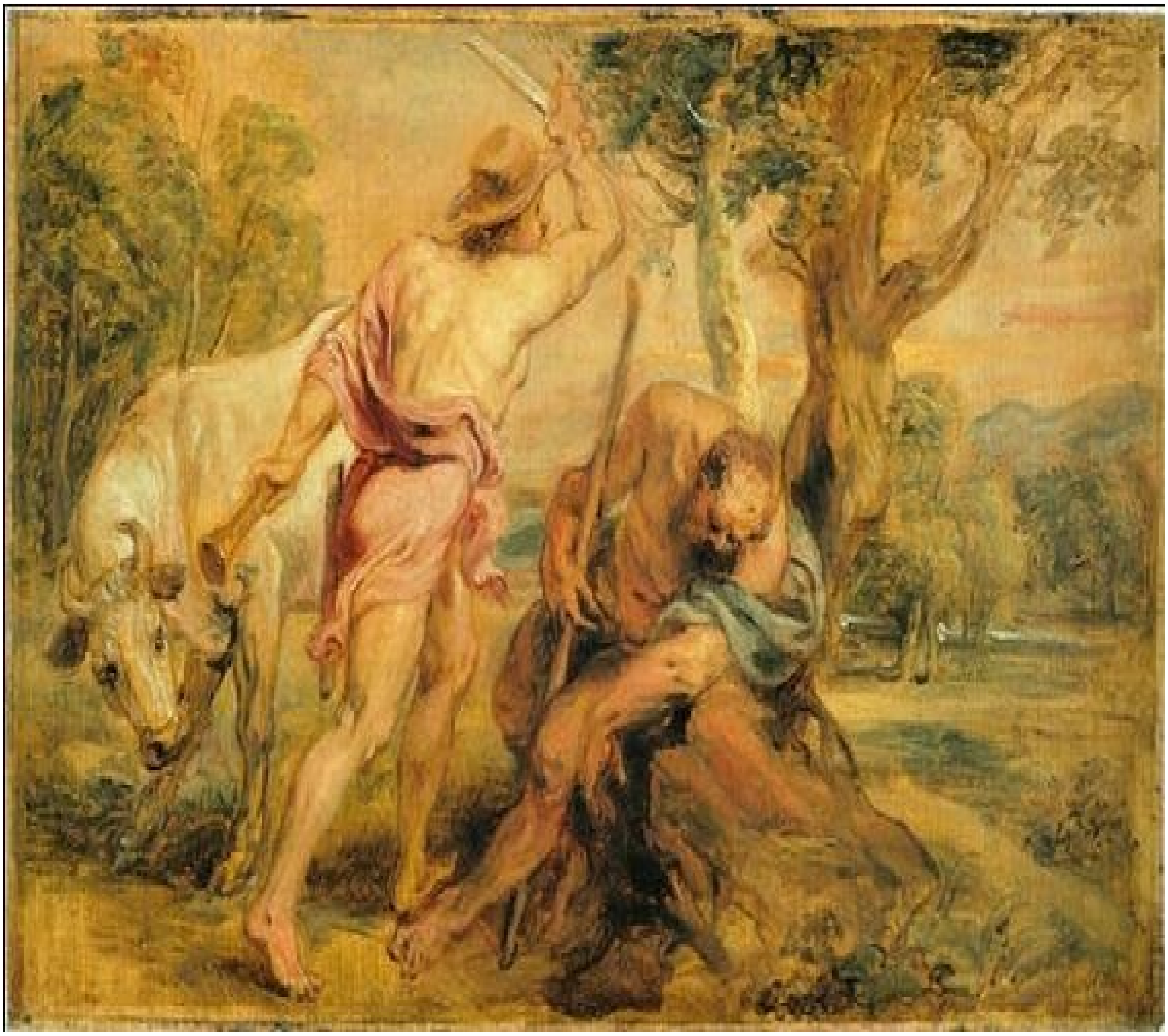
Fall of Phaeton

1636
27 x 27 cm



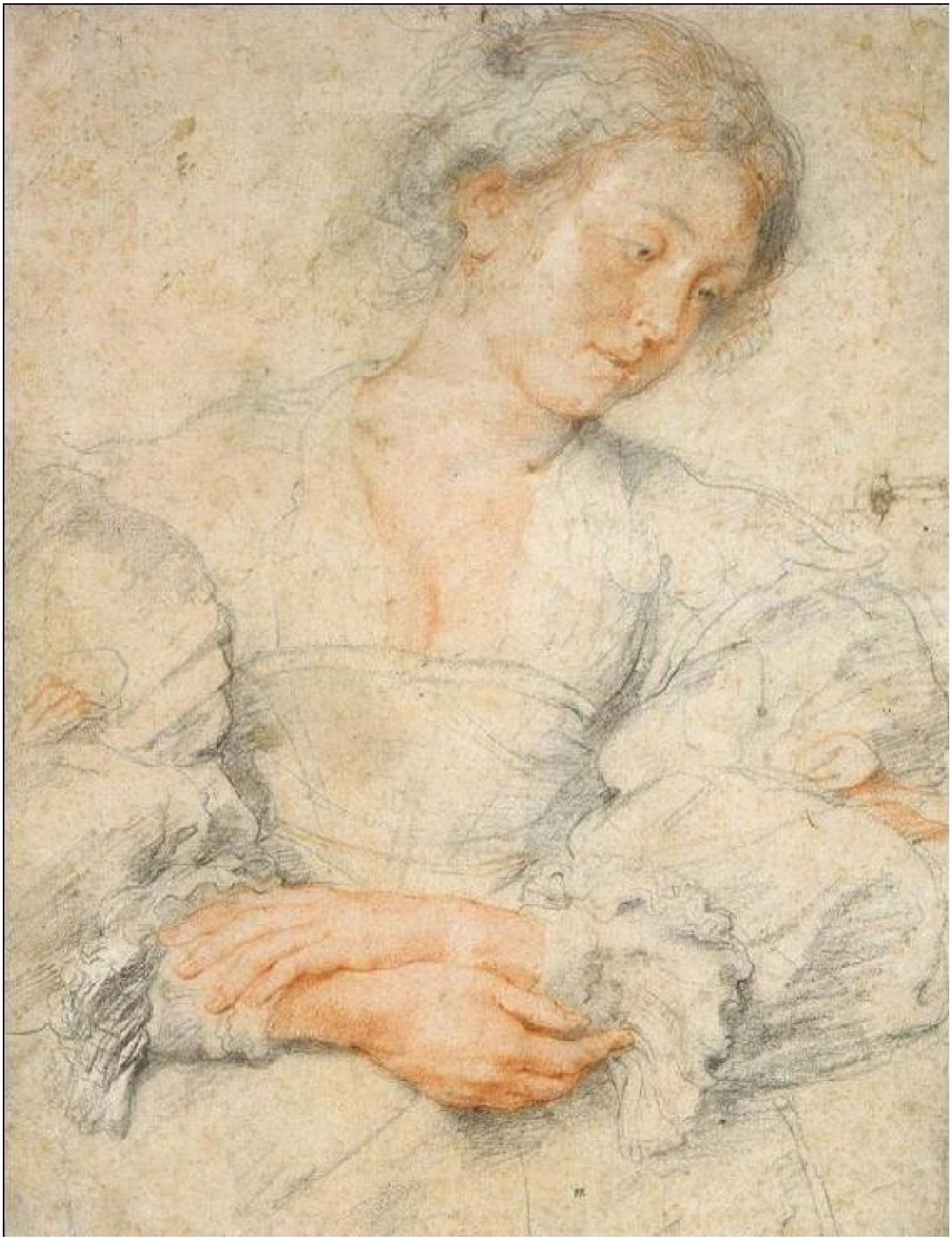
Mercury and Argus

1636
27 x 44 cm



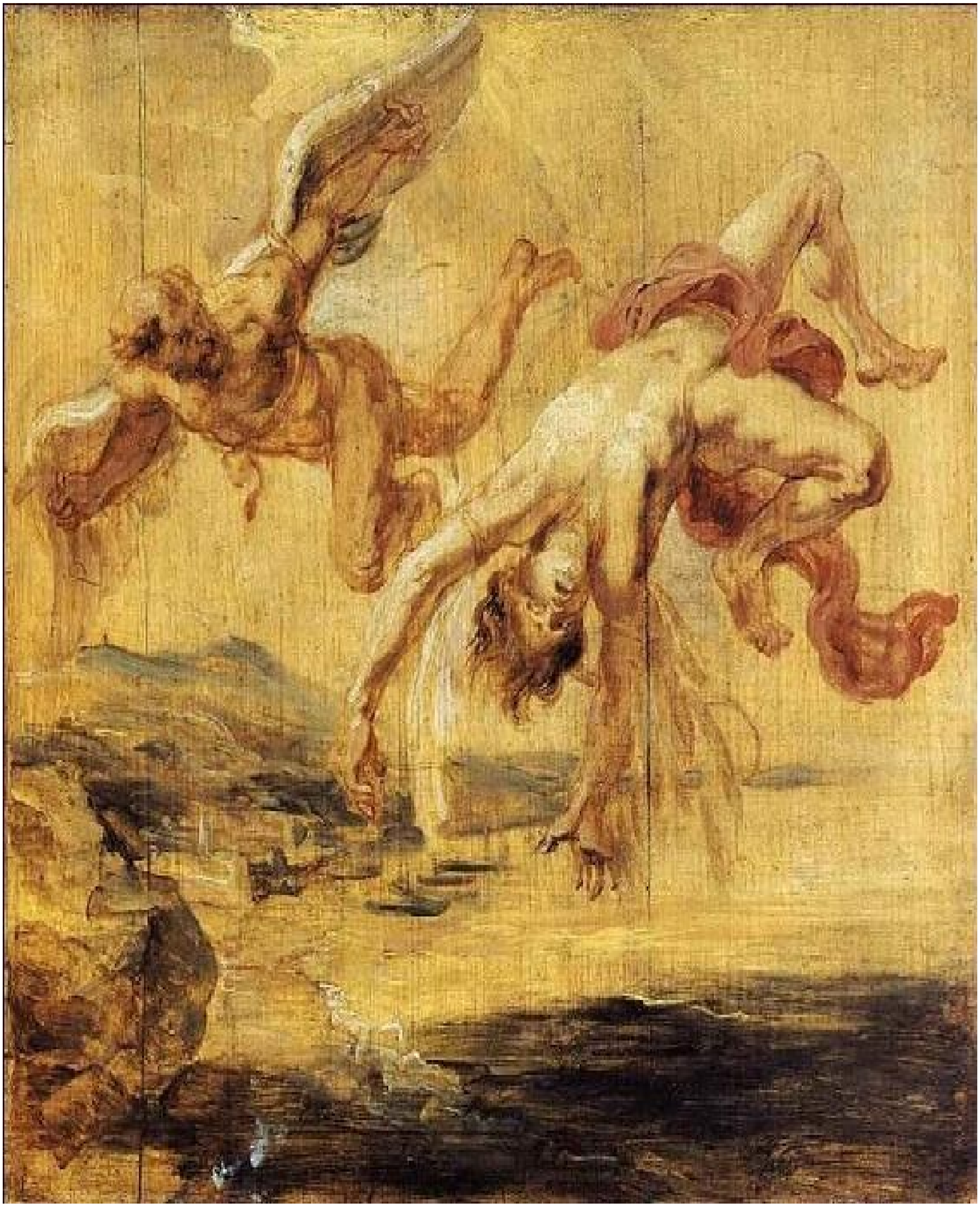
Portrait of a Young Woman

1636
473 x 354 cm
Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



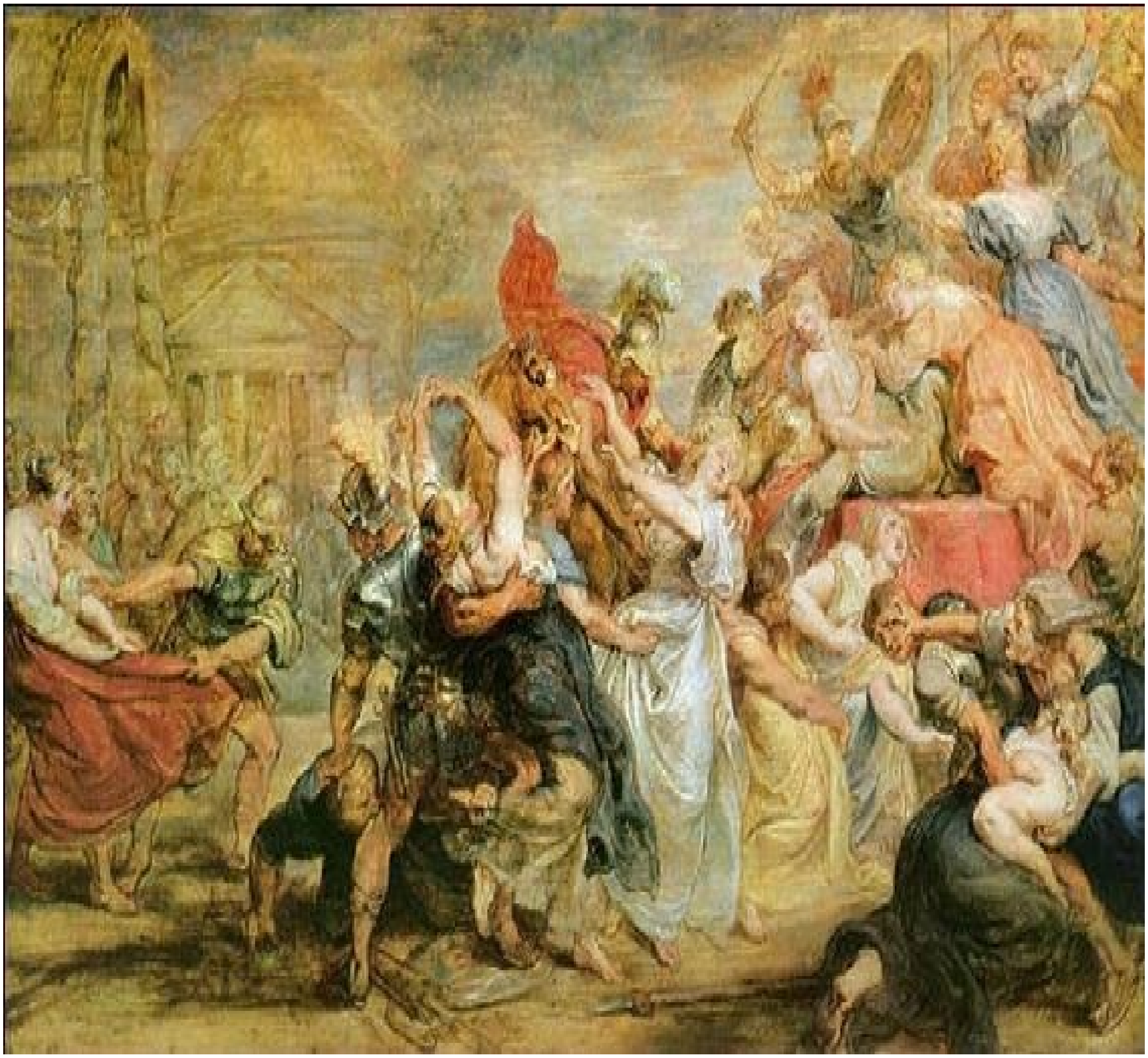
The Fall of Icarus

1636
37 x 37 cm
Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium



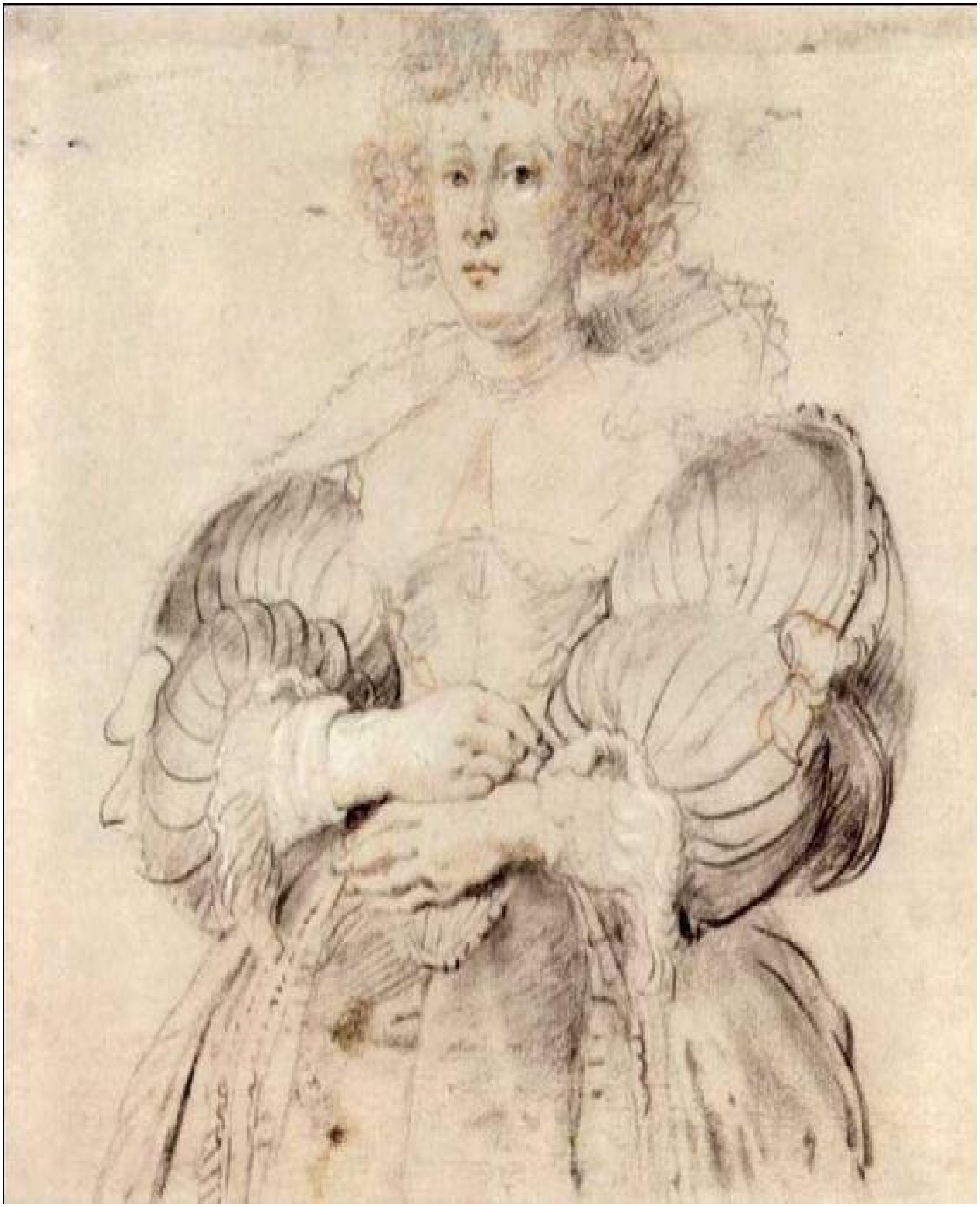
The Rape of the Sabine Women

c.1637



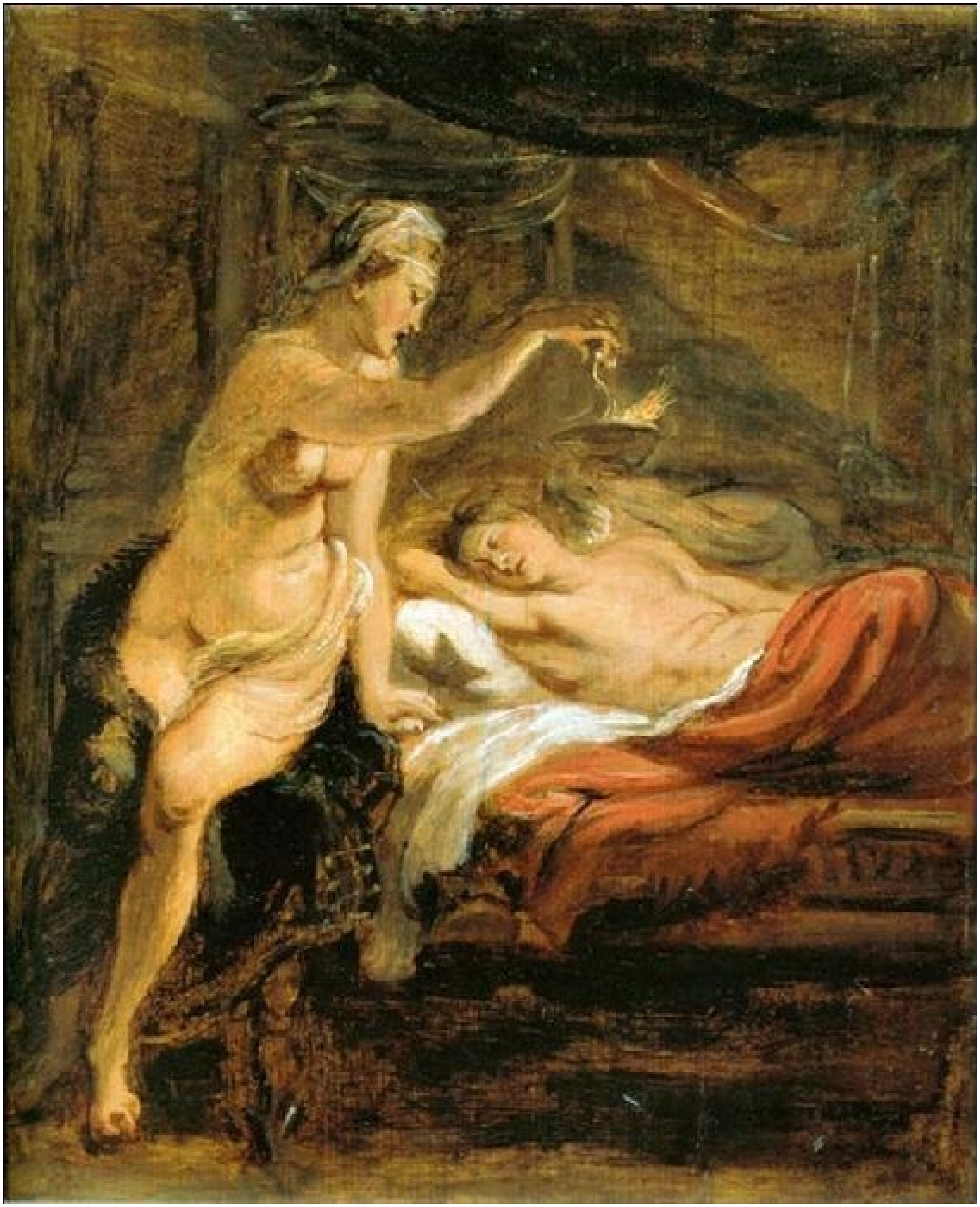
Portrait of Helena Fourment

c.1638
32 x 41 cm



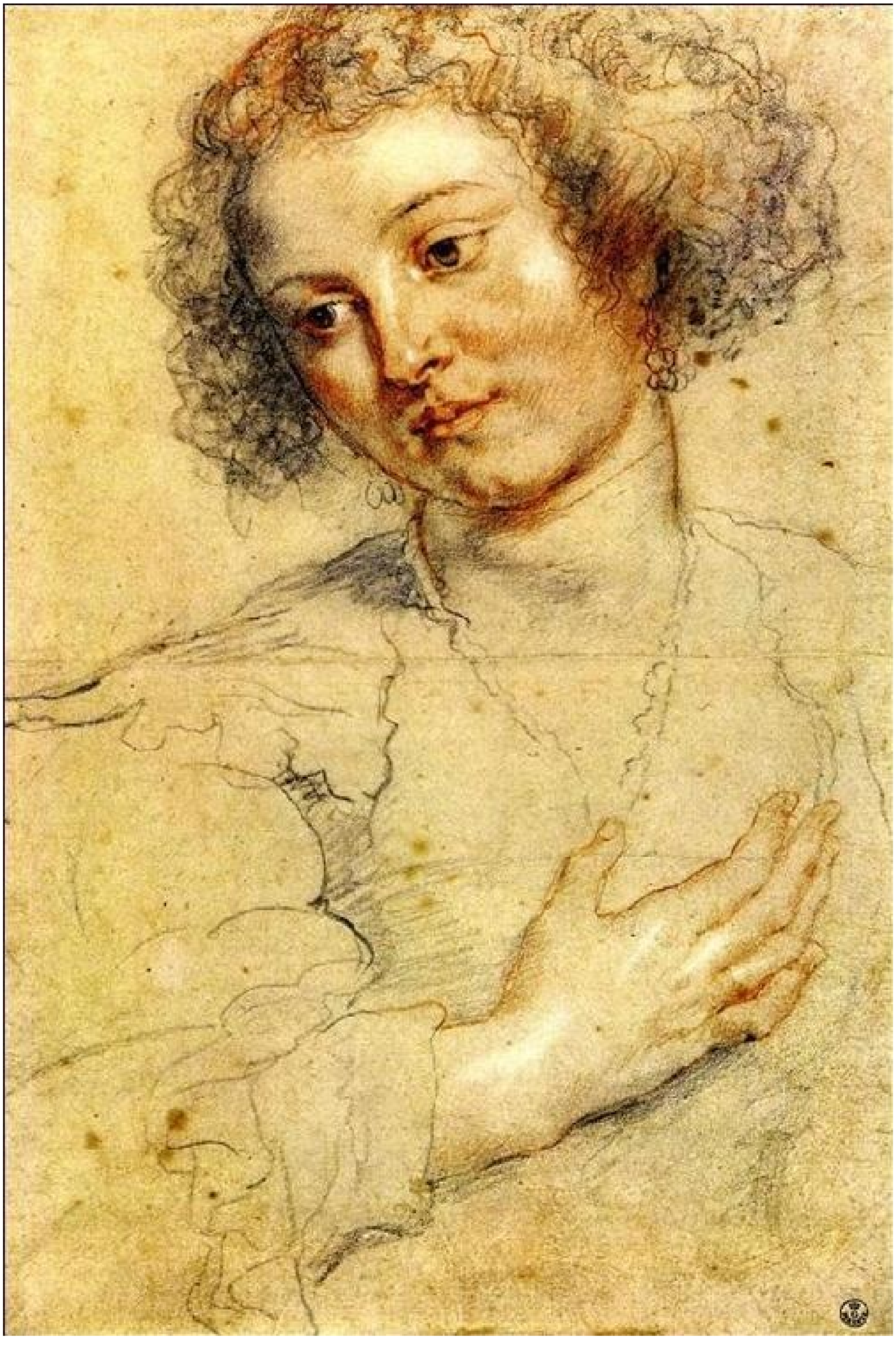
Amor and Psyche

Date unknown



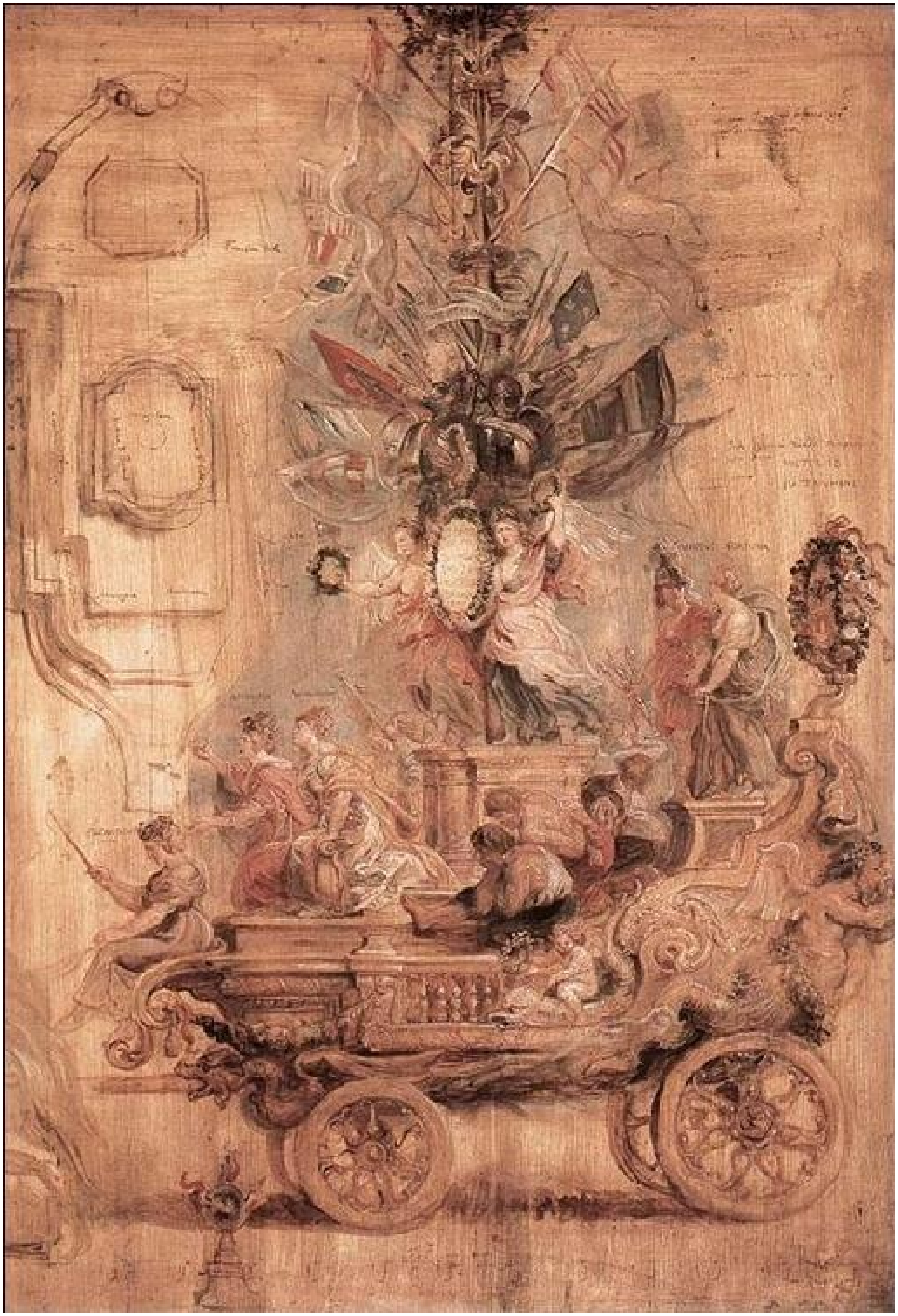
Head and Right Hand of a Woman

Private Collection
Date unknown



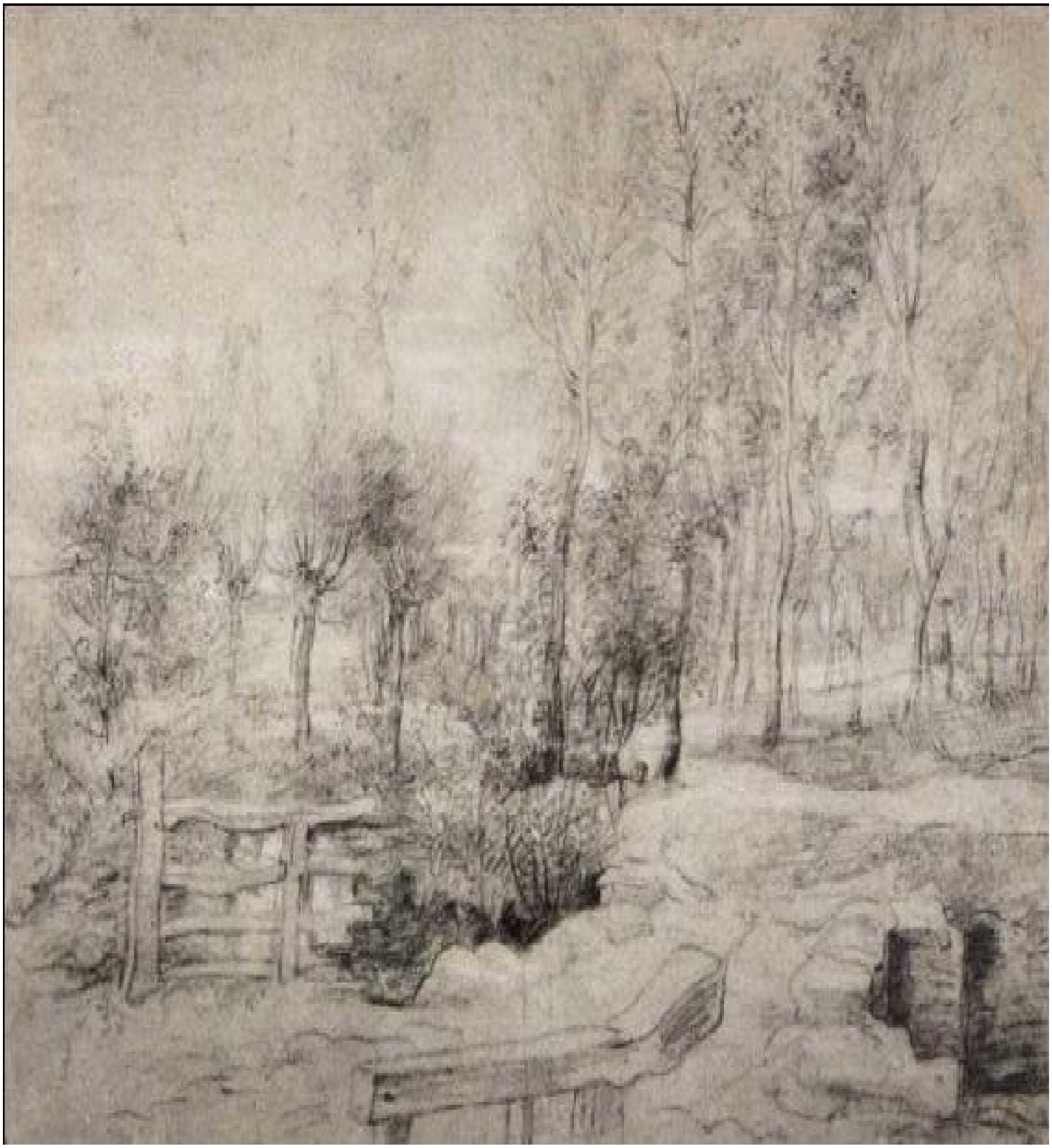
The Triumphal Car of Kallo (sketch)

c.1638
103 x 71 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten



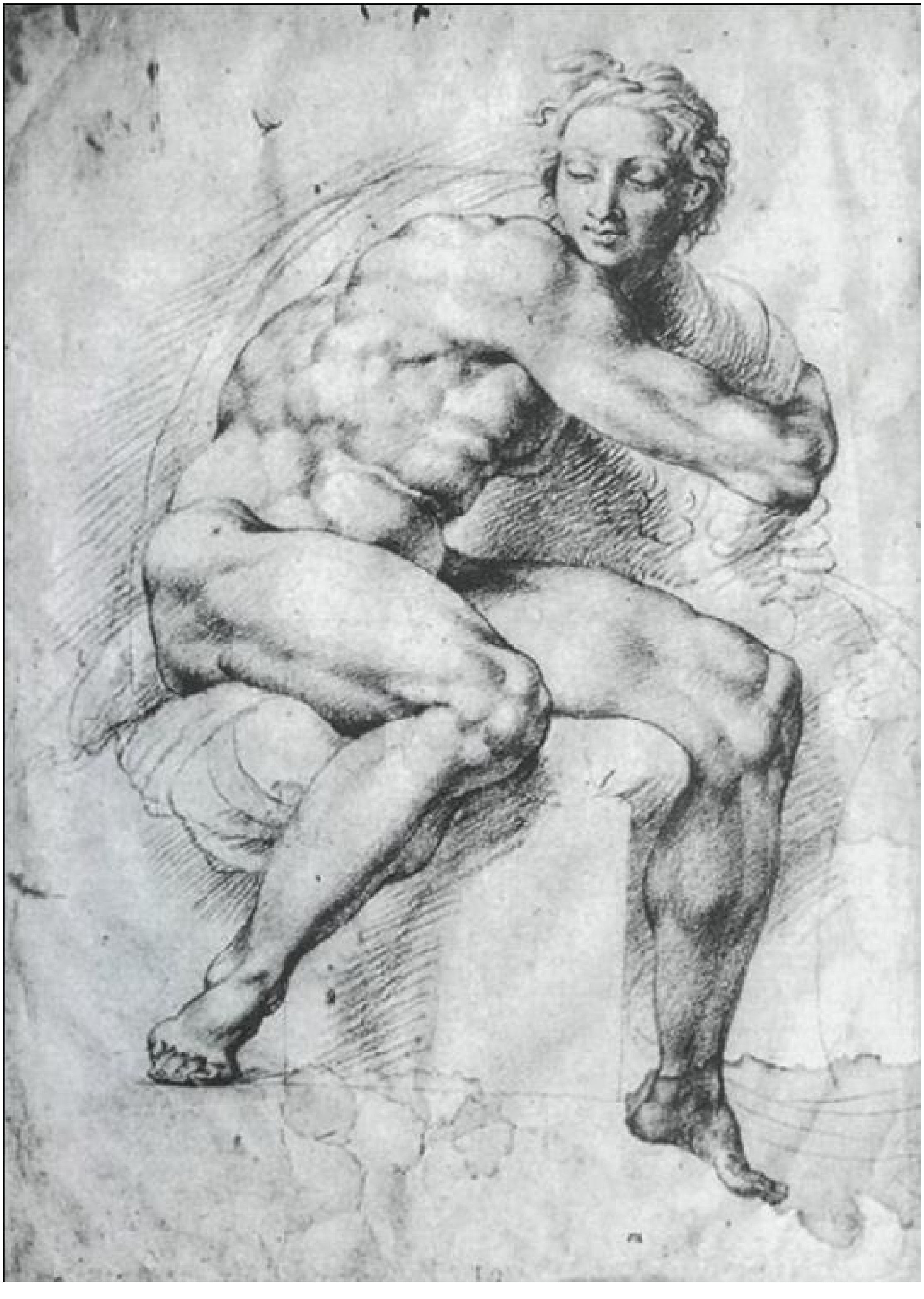
Landscape with a trees

c.1640
38 x 50 cm



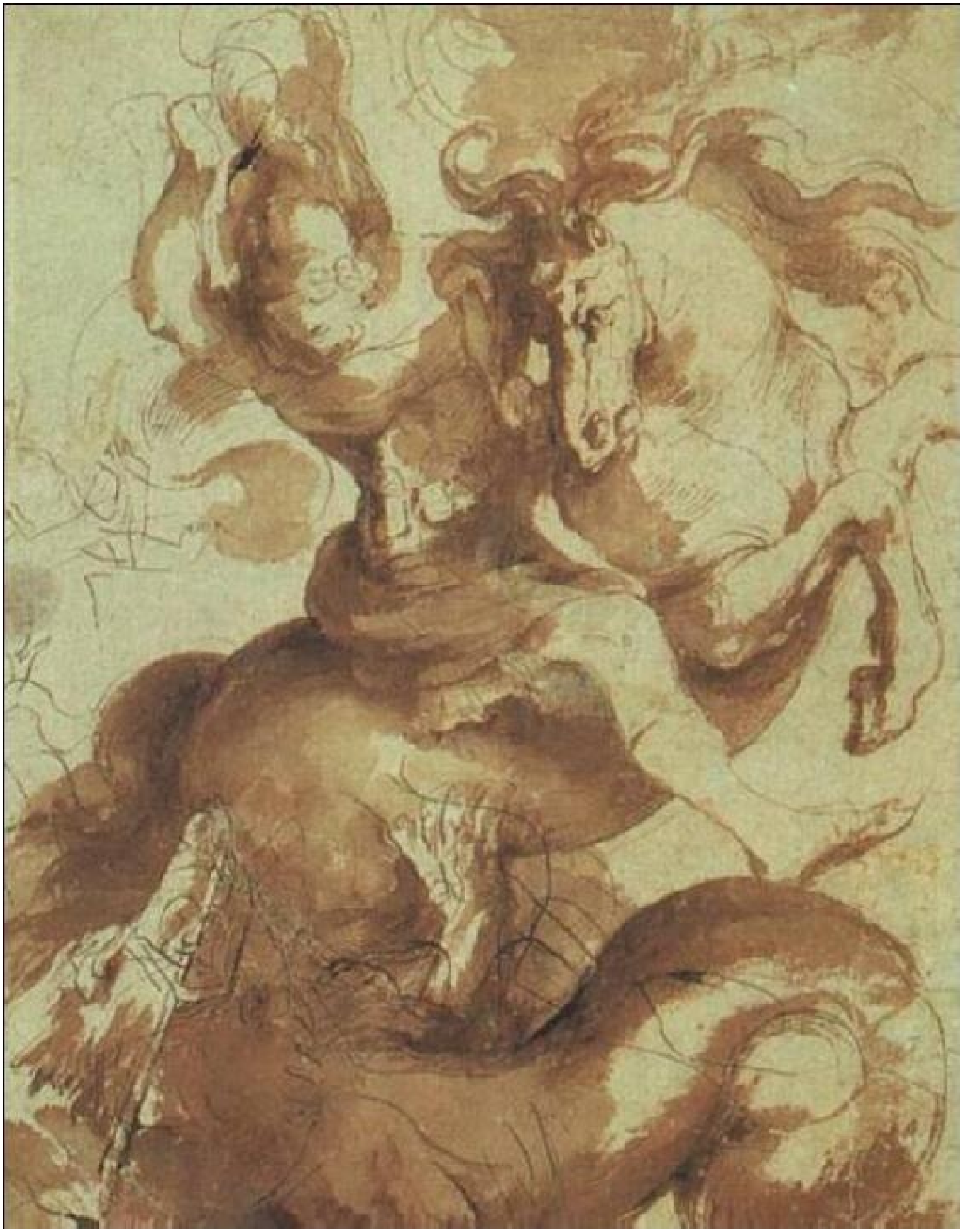
Naked Young Man

Date unknown



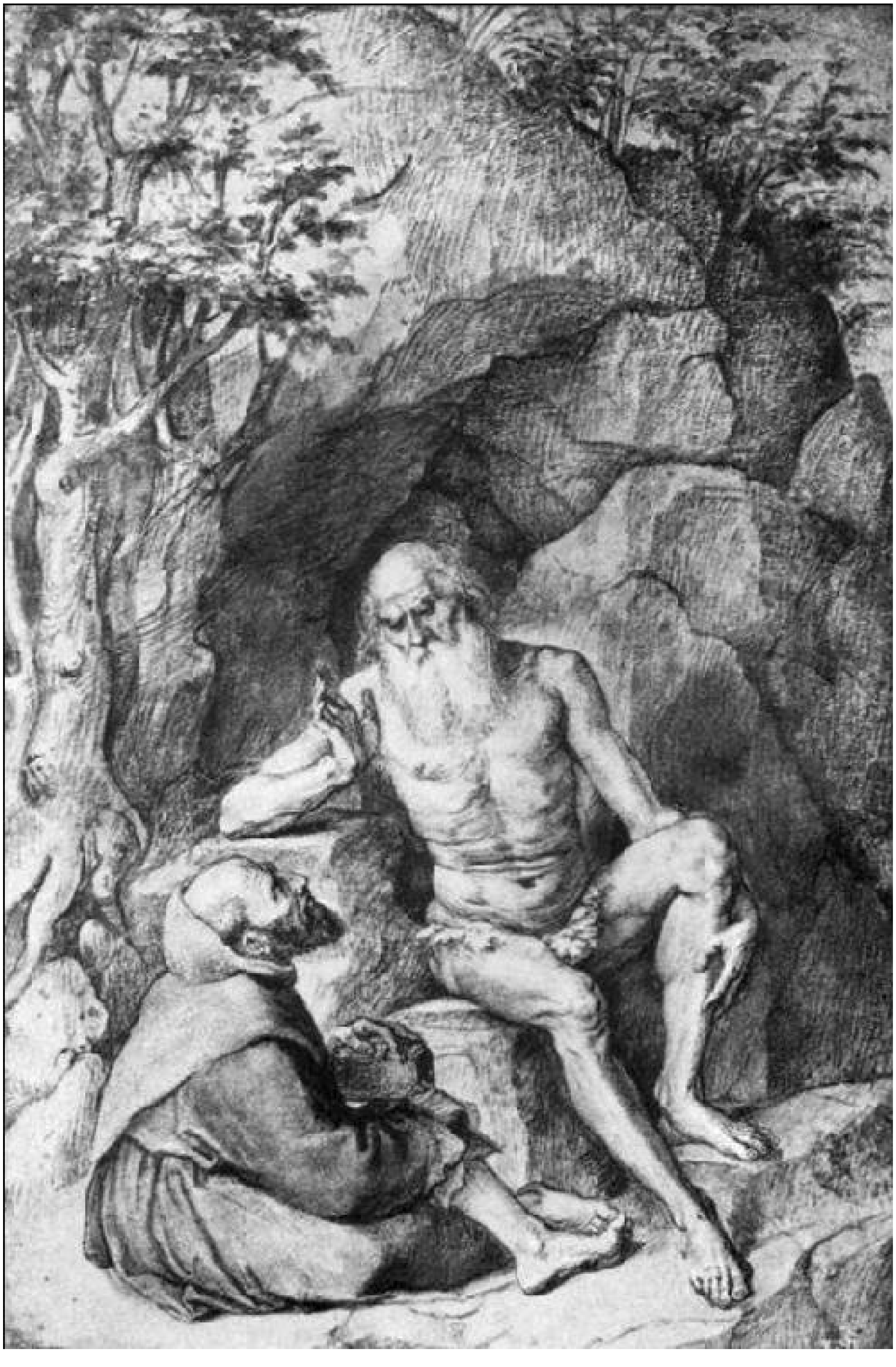
St. George Slaying the Dragon

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
Date unknown



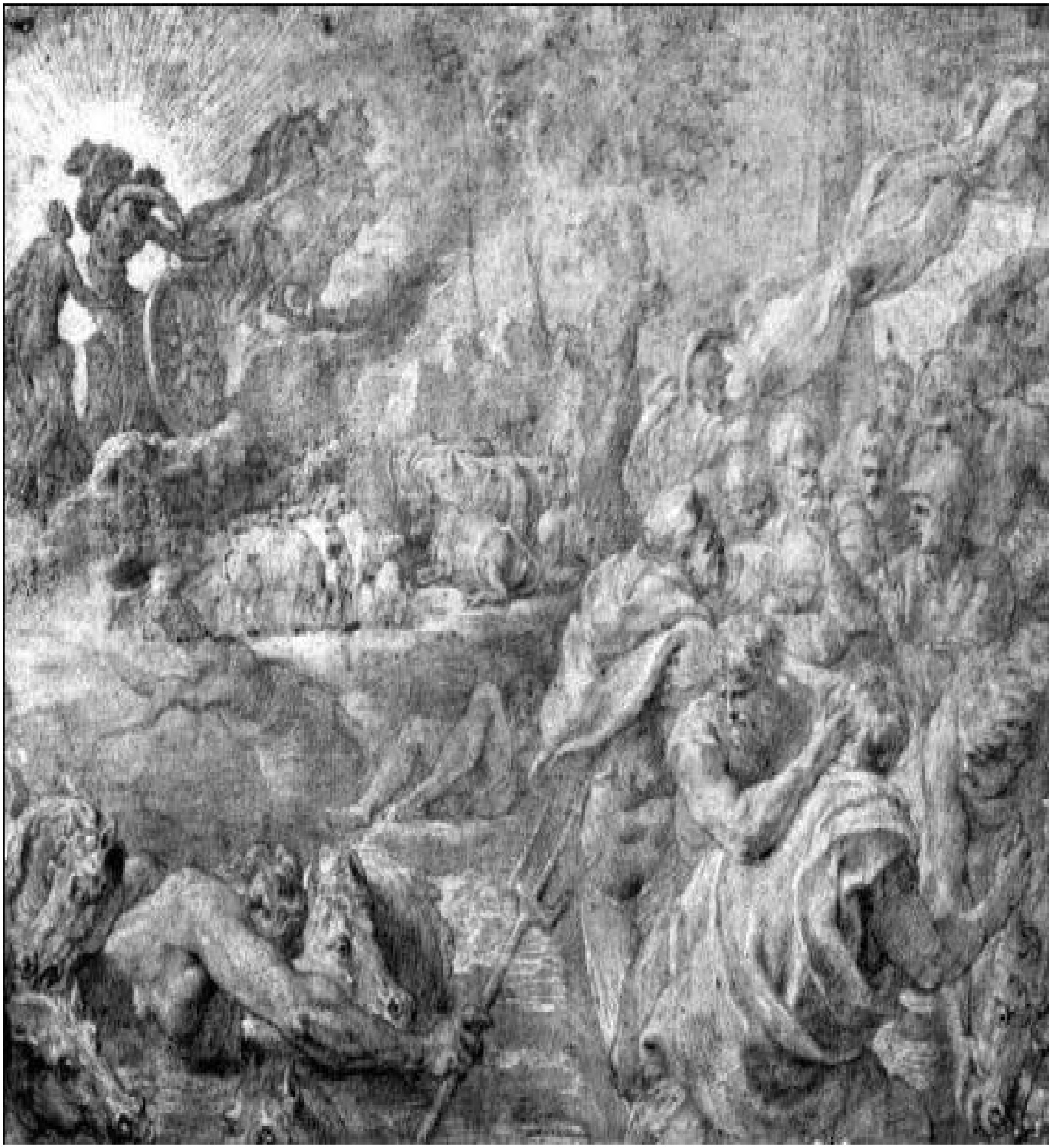
St. Onufrij Instruct Monk

42 x 28 cm
Date unknown



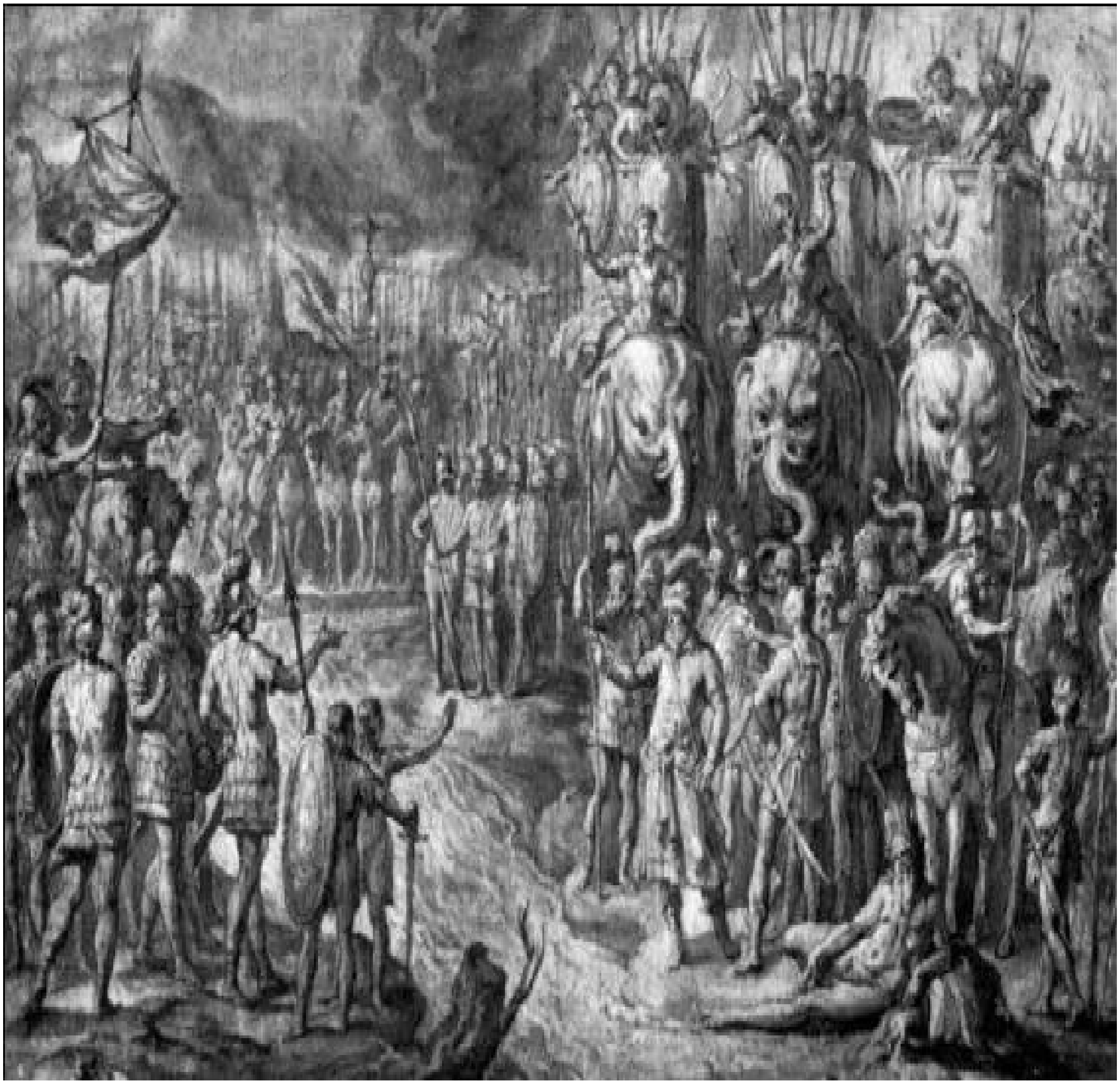
The Abduction of Bulls

24 x 42 cm
Date unknown



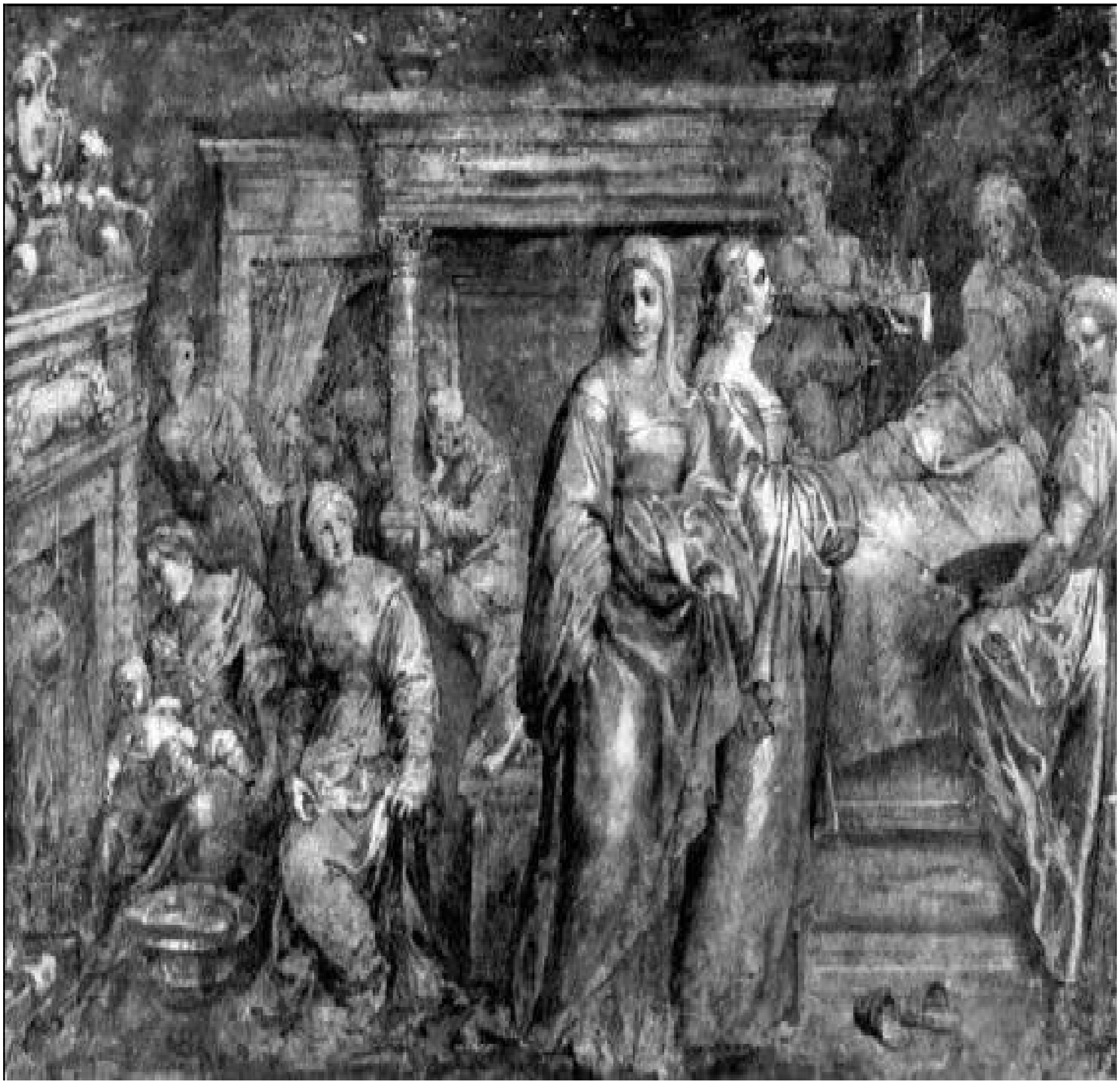
The Meeting of Scipion and Gannibal

28 x 42 cm
Date unknown



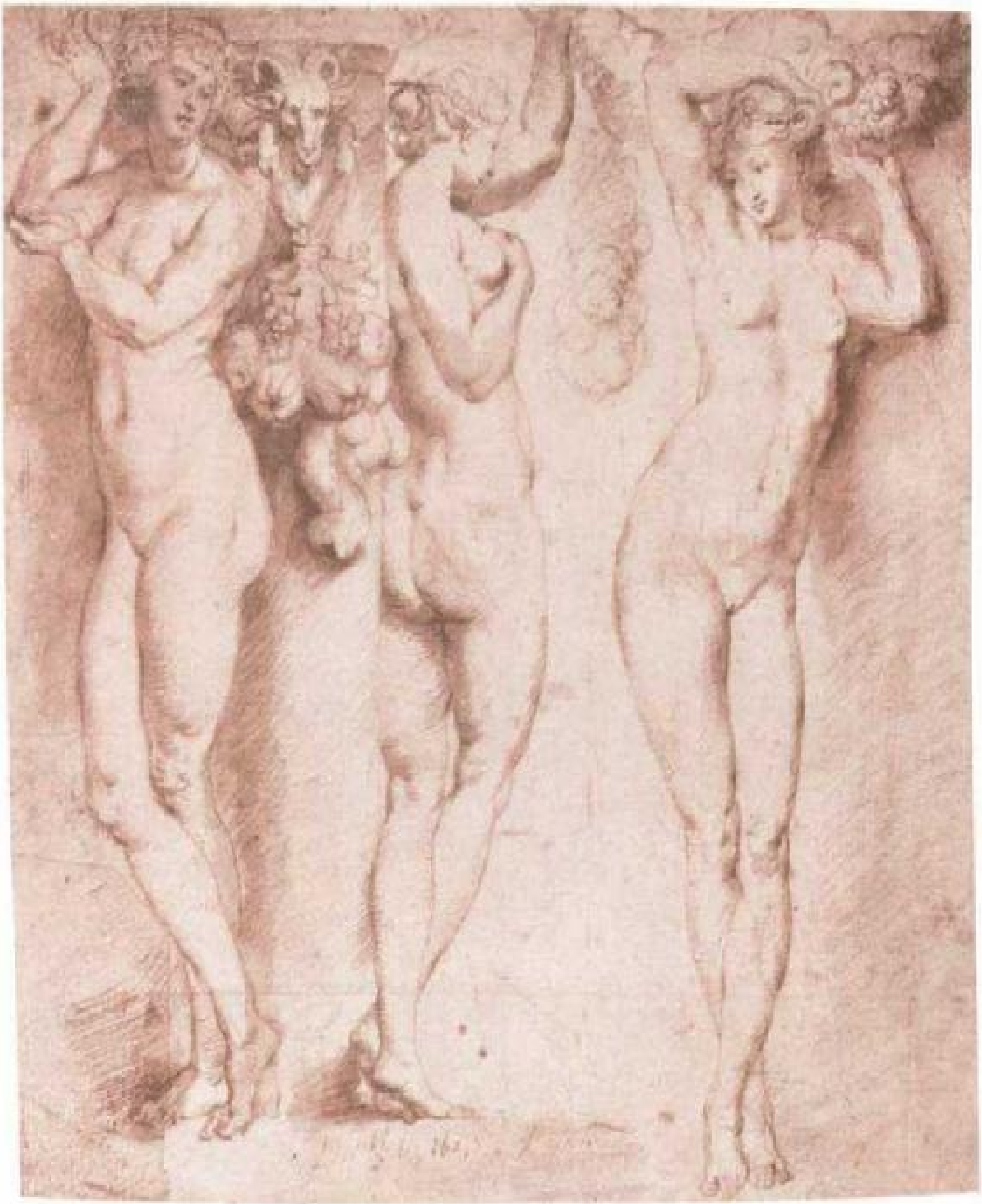
The Nativity of the Virgin Mary

30 x 44 cm
Date unknown



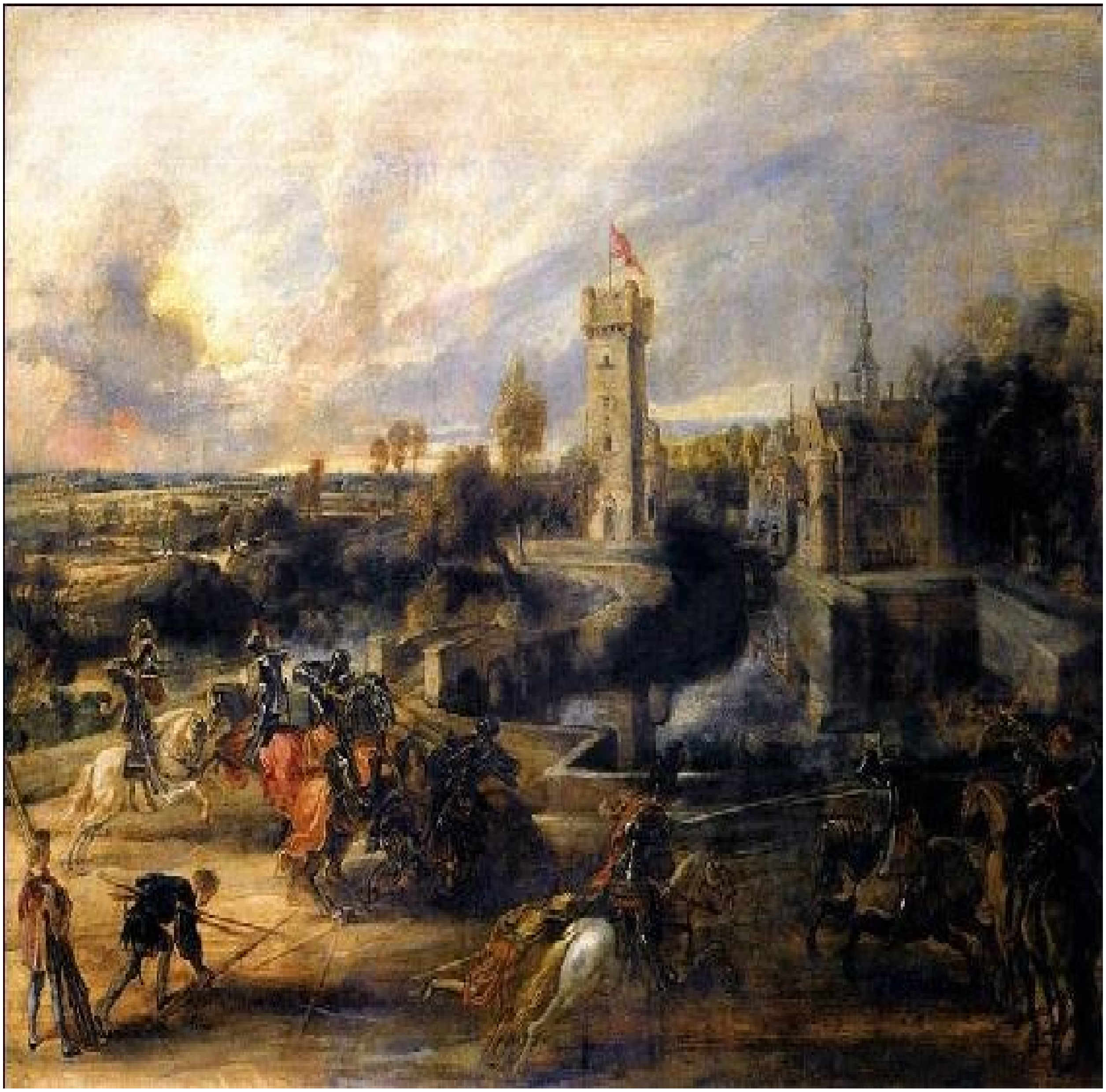
The Three Caryatids

Date Unknown
27 x 25 cm
Private collection
Date unknown



The Biographies

Elewijt Castle, Flemish Brabant, Belgium — Rubens’ home from 1635 to his death in 1640, as featured in some of his later landscapes.



Tournament in front of Castle Steen by Rubens

RUBENS by S. L. Bensusan

CONTENTS

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[II. THE PAINTER’S LIFE](#)
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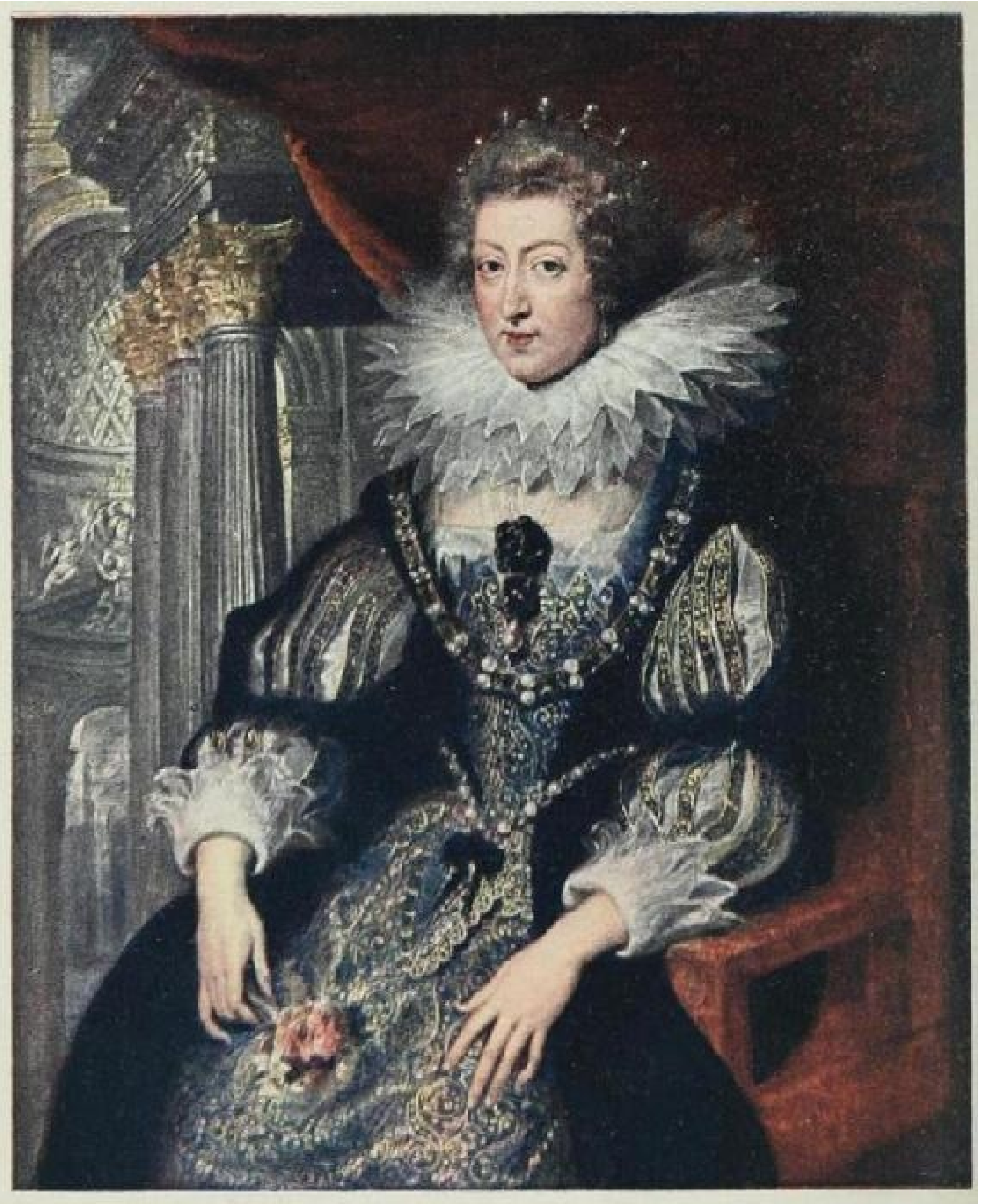
[IV. THE LATER YEARS](#)
[V. THE PAINTER’S ART](#)

PLATE

I. — ELIZABETH OF FRANCE, DAUGHTER OF HENRY IV.   Frontispiece
(In the Louvre)

The Princess is seen to great advantage in this fine portrait. The fair complexion of the sitter is remarkably preserved, the white ruff, the jewels, and the gold brocade are very cleverly handled. Another portrait of Princess Elizabeth, painted in Madrid, may now be seen in St. Petersburg.



I.

INTRODUCTION

The name of

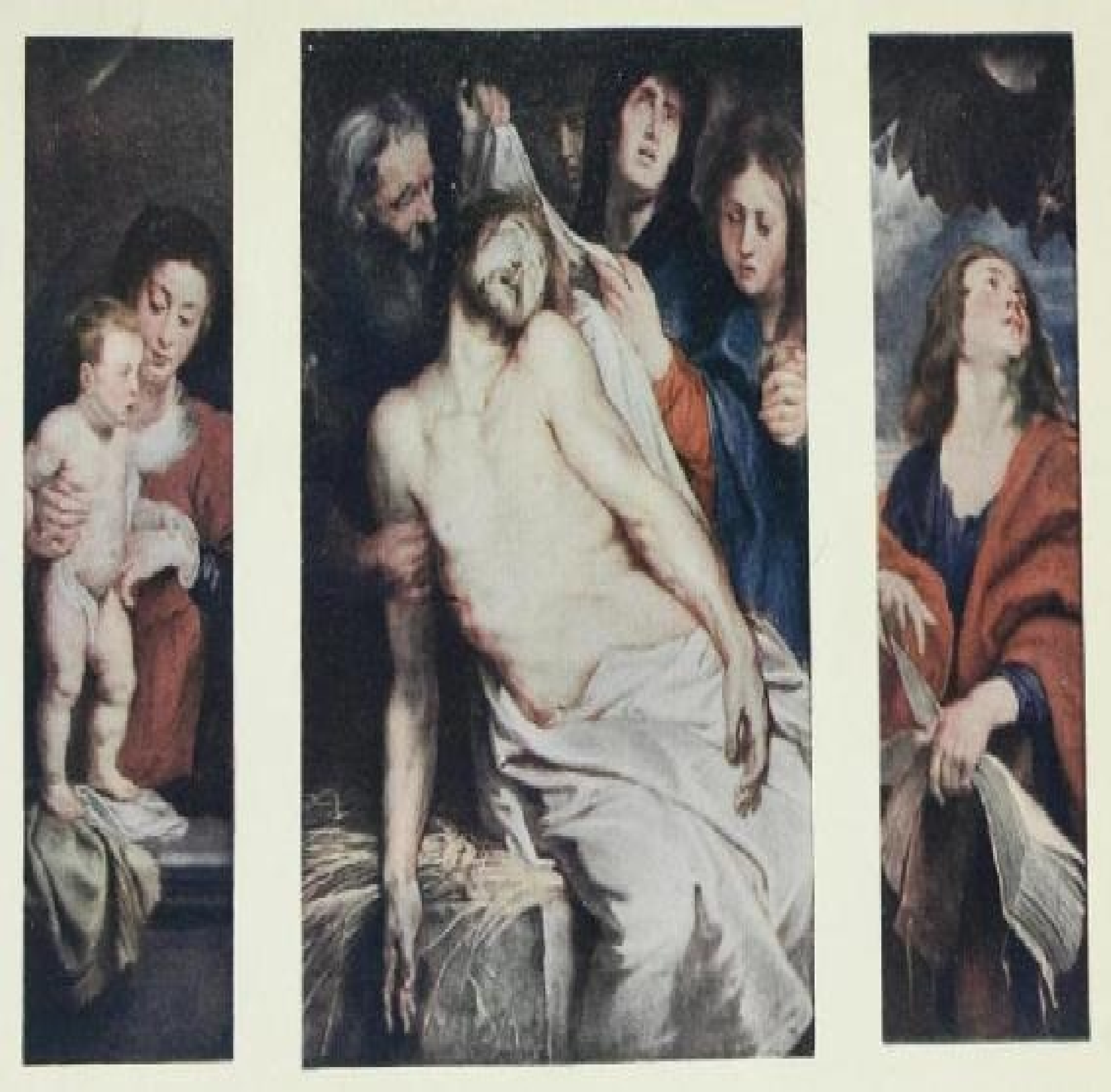
Peter Paul Rubens is written so large in the history of European art, that all the efforts of detractors have failed to stem the tide of appreciation that flows towards it. Rubens was a great master in nearly every pictorial sense of the term; and if at times the coarseness and lack of restraint of his era were reflected upon his canvas, we must blame the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rather than the man who worked through some of their most interesting years, and at worst was no more than a realist. There may have been seasons when he elected to attempt more than any man could hope to achieve. There were times when he set himself to work deliberately to express certain scenes, romantic or mythological, in a fashion that must have startled his contemporaries and gives offence to-day; but to do justice to the painter, we must consider his work as a whole, we must set the best against the worst.

PLATE

II. — CHRIST À LA PAILLE
(At Antwerp Museum)

Whatever the

Biblical story Rubens chose, he handled it not only with skill, but with a certain sense of conviction that is the more remarkable in one who owed no allegiance to the Church. There is fine feeling and deep reverence in the “Christ à la Paille,” in addition to the dramatic feeling that accompanied all his religious pictures. The colouring, though very bold, is most effective; in the hands of a less skilled painter such a display of primary colouring might well have seemed violent or even vulgar.



Consider the

vast range of achievements that embraced landscape, portraiture, and decorative work, giving to every subject such quality of workmanship and skill in composition, as none save a very few of the world’s great masters have been able to convey to canvas. And let it be remembered, too, that Rubens was not only a painter, he was a statesman and a diplomat; and amid cares and anxieties that might well have filled the life of any smaller man, he found time to paint countless pictures in every style, and to move steadily forward along the road to mastery, so that his second period is better than the first, in which he was, if the expression may be used with propriety, finding himself. The third period, which saw the painting of the great works that hang in Antwerp’s Cathedral and Museum to-day, and is represented in our own National Gallery and Wallace Collection, was the best of all. Passing from his labours as he did at a comparatively early age, for Rubens was but sixty-three when he died, he did not suffer the slow decline of powers that has so often accompanied men who reached their greatest achievements in ripe middle age and shrink to mere shadows of a name. He did not reach his supreme mastery of colour until he had lived for half a century or more, and the pictures that have the greatest blots upon them from the point of view of the twentieth century, were painted before he reached the summit of his powers. It is perhaps unfortunate that Rubens painted far too many works to admit of a truly representative collection in any city or gallery. The best are widely scattered; some are in the Prado in Madrid, others are in Belgium, some are in Florence. Holland has a goodly collection, while Antwerp boasts among many masterpieces “The Passing of Christ,” “The Adoration of the Magi,” “The Prodigal Son,” and “The Christ à la Paille.” Munich, Brussels, Dresden, Vienna, and other cities have famous examples of both ripe and early art that must be seen before the master can be judged fairly and without prejudice. It is impossible to found an opinion not likely to be shaken, upon the work to be seen in London or in Paris, where the Louvre holds many of the painter’s least attractive works. It may be said that Peter Paul Rubens is represented in every gallery of importance throughout Europe, that the number of his acknowledged works runs into four figures, and that there are very few without some definite and attractive aspect of treatment and composition that goes far to atone for the occasional shortcomings of taste. For his generation Rubens sufficed amply. He was a man of so many gifts that he would have made his mark had he never set brush to a canvas, although time has blotted out the recollection of his diplomatic achievements or relegated them to obscure chronicles and manuscripts that are seldom disturbed save by scholars. To nine out of ten he is known only as a painter, and his fame rests upon the work that chances to have given his critics their first view and most lasting impression of his varied achievements. It may be said that among those who care least for Rubens, and are quite satisfied to condemn him for the coarseness with which he treated certain subjects, there are many who are prompt to declare that in matters of art the treatment is of the first importance and the subject is but secondary.

However, Rubens is hardly in need of an apologist. His best work makes him famous in any company, and there is so much of it that the rest may be disregarded. Moreover, we must not forget that the types he portrayed from time to time with such amazing frankness really existed all round him. He took them as he found them, just as the earlier painters of the Renaissance took their Madonnas from the peasant girls they found working in the fields, or travelling to the cities on saint days and at times of high festival. Many a Renaissance Madonna enshrined on canvas for the adoration of the devout could remove the least suspicion of sanctity from herself, if she did but raise her downcast eyes or smile, as doubtless she smiled in the studio wherein she was immortalised. For the artist sees a vision beyond the sitter, and under his brush the sanctification or profanation of a type are matters of simple and rapid accomplishment. If another Rubens were to arise to-day, he could find sitters in plenty who would respond to the treatment that his prototype has made familiar. Perhaps to the men and women with whom he was thrown in contact, these creations were interesting inasmuch as they afforded a glimpse into an under-world of which they knew little or nothing. The offence of certain pictures is increased by the fact that, when Rubens painted them, he had not attained to the supreme mastership over colour, and inspiration of composition, that came to him in later life. But in a brief review of the artist’s life and work enough has been told of the aspects upon which his detractors love to dilate. It is time to turn to his brilliant and varied career, and note the incidents that have the greatest interest or the deepest influence upon his art work.

II. THE

PAINTER’S LIFE

Peter Paul

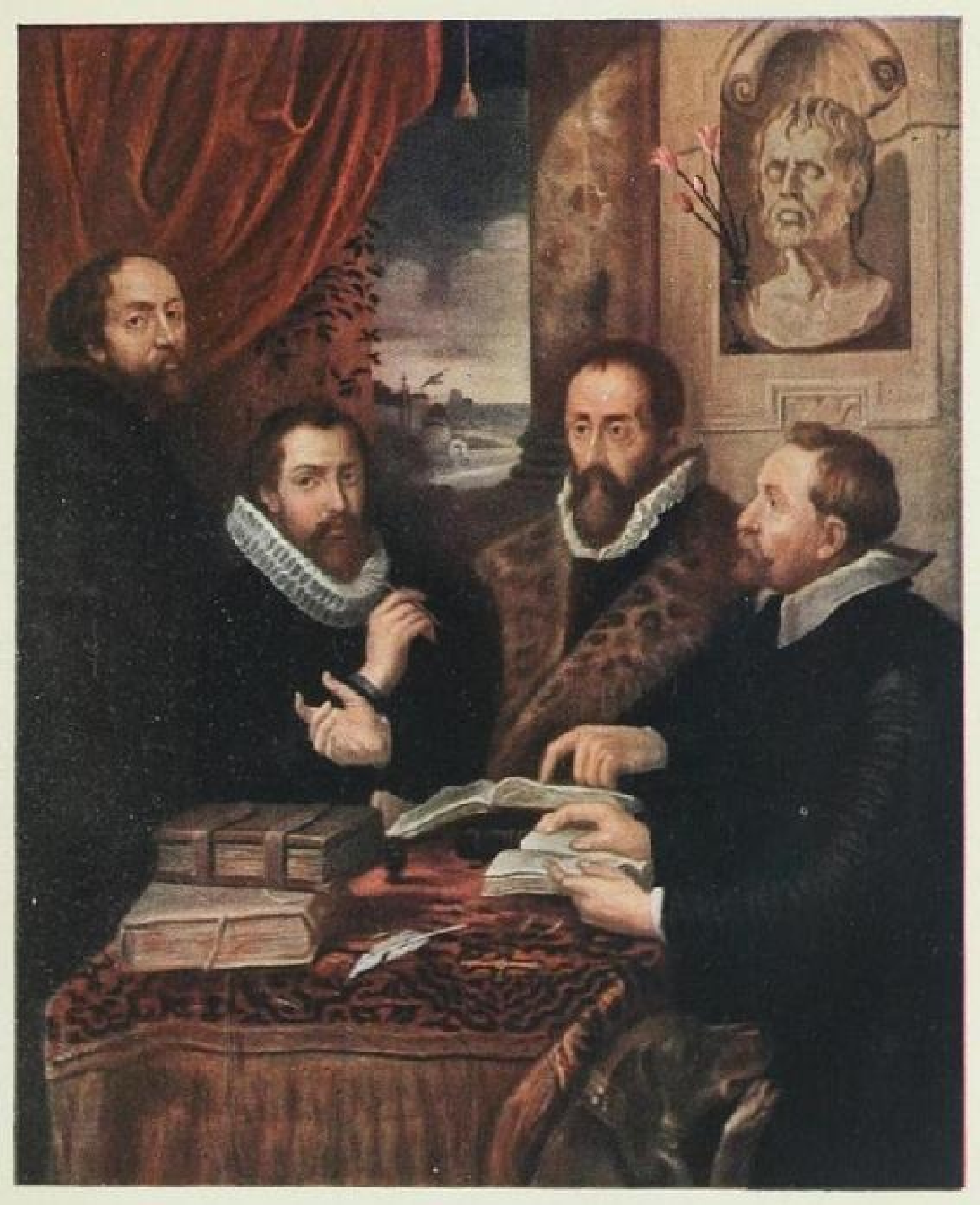
Rubens was born in A.D. 1577, at Siegen in Germany, where his father, Dr. John Rubens, a man of great attainments, was living in disgrace arising out of an old intrigue with the dissolute wife of William the Silent. But for the necessity of shielding the reputation of the House of Orange, there seems no doubt that John Rubens would have paid the death penalty for his offence. It is curious to reflect that, had he done so, Peter Paul would have been lost to the world, for the intrigue would seem to have occurred in the neighbourhood of the year 1570, while Peter Paul was not born until seven years later. When the child was one year old the Rubens family was allowed to return to Cologne, where John Rubens had gone on leaving Antwerp in 1568. Here Peter Paul and his elder brother, Philip, were brought up, in utter ignorance of the misfortunes that had befallen their father, whose death was recorded when his famous son was nine or ten years old. After his decease the boys’ mother decided to return to Antwerp, where her husband in his early days had enjoyed a considerable reputation as a lawyer, and held civic appointments. Although much of the family money must have been lost, perhaps on account of the fall in values resulting from the terrible war with Spain, there would seem to have been enough to enable the widow and her two sons to live in comfort, if not in luxury. Peter Paul was sent to a good school, where he made progress and became very popular, probably because he was strikingly handsome, considerably gifted, and very quick to learn.

PLATE

III. — THE FOUR PHILOSOPHERS
(In the Pitti Palace, Florence)

This picture

was probably painted in Italy. The man sitting behind the table with an open book before him is Justus Lipsius the philosopher. To his left is one of his pupils, and on the right we see Philip Rubens, pen in hand, and Peter Paul himself standing up against a red curtain.



At the age of

thirteen school-days came to an end, and the boy became a page in the service of the widowed Countess of Lalaing, whose husband had been one of the governors of Antwerp. Here, at a very impressionable age, Rubens obtained first his acquaintance with and finally his mastery over all the intricacies of courtly etiquette. In quite a short time he became a polished gentleman, in the sixteenth-century acceptation of that term. But the instinct to study art already developed made the duties of a page seem tiresome and unattractive, and we learn that the boy importuned his mother to be allowed to study painting.

Apparently he had shown sufficient promise to justify the request, and he was placed, first under an unknown painter named Verhaecht and then under Adam van Noort, with whom he remained four years before passing to the studio of Otto van Veen, a scholar, a gentleman, and a painter of quality. The life here would seem to have developed in Rubens many of the qualities that were destined to bring him fame and great rewards. By the time he was twenty, the Guild of St.

Luke in Antwerp received him as a member, and a year later he received an appointment from the city to assist his master in some civic decorations. So the glittering years of his first youth passed, happily, prosperously, and uneventfully, and when he was no more than twenty-three Peter Paul Rubens turned his steps towards Italy, then, as Paris is now, the Mecca of the pilgrim of the Arts.

If we wish to

find some explanation for the splendid colouring that makes the masterpieces of Rubens the delight of every unprejudiced eye, we may surely be content to remember that he saw Venice with the enthusiastic eye of twenty-three in the year 1600. Even to-day when Venice, vulgarised to the fullest extent that modern ingenuity can accomplish, has become no more than a remnant most forlorn of what it was, it is one of the world’s wonder cities. When the seventeenth century was opening its eventful pages, the memory of wonderful achievements was upon the great city of the Adriatic, it was still a power to be reckoned with. The season of pageants had not passed, and the luck that seemed destined to accompany Rubens throughout his career was in close attendance upon him here. The Duke of Mantua. Vincenzo Gonzaga, saw some of his work, and was so struck by its quality that he sent for the young painter. The man seemed worthy of his creations, and the Duke promptly offered him a position in his suite, an offer too good to be declined. Thereafter the sojourn in Venice was a short one. Mantua, Florence, and Genoa were visited in turn, and in Mantua, after some

Mantua, Florence, and Genoa were visited in turn, and in Mantua, after some months travelling to and fro, the Court settled down, and Rubens was enabled to study the splendid collection of works that the city’s rulers had collected. In the late summer of the following year Rubens would seem to have visited Rome, where he faced the terrible heat without any ill effect and devoted himself with untiring energy to a study of the work that is to be seen there and nowhere else. It would appear that he was well received by the leading artists of the day, that he made a friend of Caravaggio, and he was soon commissioned to paint an altar-piece for the Church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem. The work, done in three parts, is now we believe in the possession of the French Government, and is to be seen in Grasse or one of the neighbouring towns of the Mediterranean littoral. When Rubens’ leave of absence expired — it must not be forgotten that he was in the service of Mantua’s ruler, and was not his own master — he returned to the north, where the Duke would seem to have employed him for a time as an art expert. We may imagine that politics and art were closely connected, and that Rubens soon knew responsibility in connection with both. The work must have been very well done in each case, for rather more than a year later, when it became necessary in the interests of Mantua’s political position to send a message to the King of Spain, Rubens was the chosen envoy.

Nowadays the journey from Mantua to Madrid may be accomplished without extraordinary exertion in forty-eight hours, but three hundred years ago such a journey must have savoured of adventure, more particularly as the painter-diplomat was in charge of the splendid presents sent to Philip by the Duke. Nearly a year passed before Rubens returned to Mantua. His mission executed, he was rewarded with the grant of a regular income, and after executing some more work at home to the complete satisfaction of his patron, he returned to Rome, this time in the company of his brother.

They lived near the Piazza di Spagna, where the Roman models and flower-sellers congregate to this day, and tourists are as the sand upon the sea-shore for multitude.

Philip Rubens, smitten by the weakness to which so many men have succumbed before and since, celebrated his journey by writing a book. It was printed by the famous Plantin Press, with one of whose directors Peter Paul had been at school, and was illustrated by the artist. We may suppose that the work Rubens had done and was illustrated by the artist. We may suppose that the work Rubens had done in Rome on the occasion of his earlier visit had satisfied its purchasers, for he received another commission for the Chiesa Nuova, but was recalled before it was completed, and taken to Genoa by the Duke of Mantua.

However, he soon returned to Rome, where he remained until the close of 1608

and then left for Antwerp, where his mother, who had been living in that city for some years, was dangerously ill. Rubens does not seem to have known how ill she was, for he arrived in Antwerp too late to see her. She was a woman cast in heroic mould, most generous of wives, most devoted of mothers.

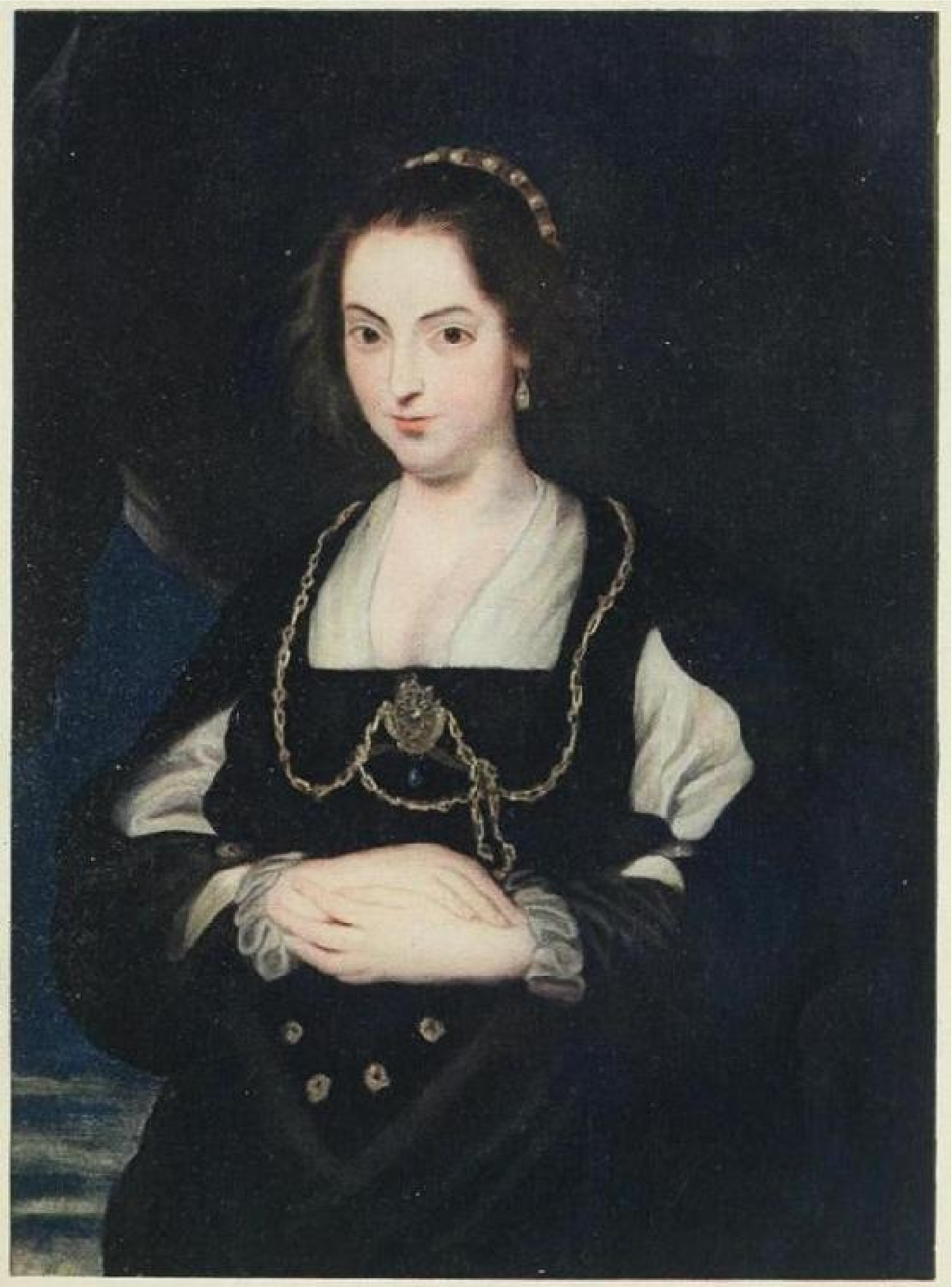
PLATE

IV. — ISABELLA BRANDT
(In the Wallace Collection)

Naturally

enough Rubens painted many portraits of his first wife. There is the delightful work in the Pinacotek at Munich where the painter sits by her side, there are others in the Uffizi at Florence, and the great Hermitage Gallery at St.

Petersburg.



Perhaps the

shock of her death awoke Rubens to the disadvantages attaching to the paid service of any man, perhaps he was beginning to realise his own quality and to know that he could stand alone. Perhaps he saw, too, that Italy had taught him as much as his years would allow him to assimilate, enough to make a man of mark in Antwerp. We have no certain information on these points, we can do no more than make surmises, but we do know that Rubens wrote to the Duke of Mantua, thanking him for all the favours and marks of confidence that he had received, and acquainting him with his decision to resign from his service. With the return to Antwerp the era that opened with the visit to Venice eight years before comes to a close, and we enter upon the most strenuous period of the artist’s life.

III. SECOND PERIOD

Rubens carried an assured reputation with him to Antwerp. The story of his success had doubtless been spread through the town by people who were in touch with the Italian courts, and it is hardly likely that his elder brother Philip, now secretary to the Antwerp Town Council, and a man wielding considerable influence, had forgotten to tell the story of his brother’s progress. Antwerp was in the early enjoyment of a period of peace following disastrous war, and it was quite in keeping with the spirit of the times that the leading citizens, who had taken a prominent part in the world of strife, should now turn their thoughts to the world of art and should endeavour to take their part in the friendly competition that all prosperous cities waged against one another in their pursuit of beauty; and this competition led to the enriching of churches and council-chambers with the finest ripe fruits of contemporary art. Antwerp had established a circle for the exclusive benefit of those who had travelled in Italy, because it was recognised on all sides that the best mental and artistic development was associated with Italian travel. Rubens was admitted at once to the charmed circle on the initiative of his friend Jean Breughel, the animal painter, with whom Rubens collaborated in a picture that may be seen to-day at the Hague, and is called “The Earthly Paradise,” a quaint medley of two styles that cannot be persuaded to harmonise.

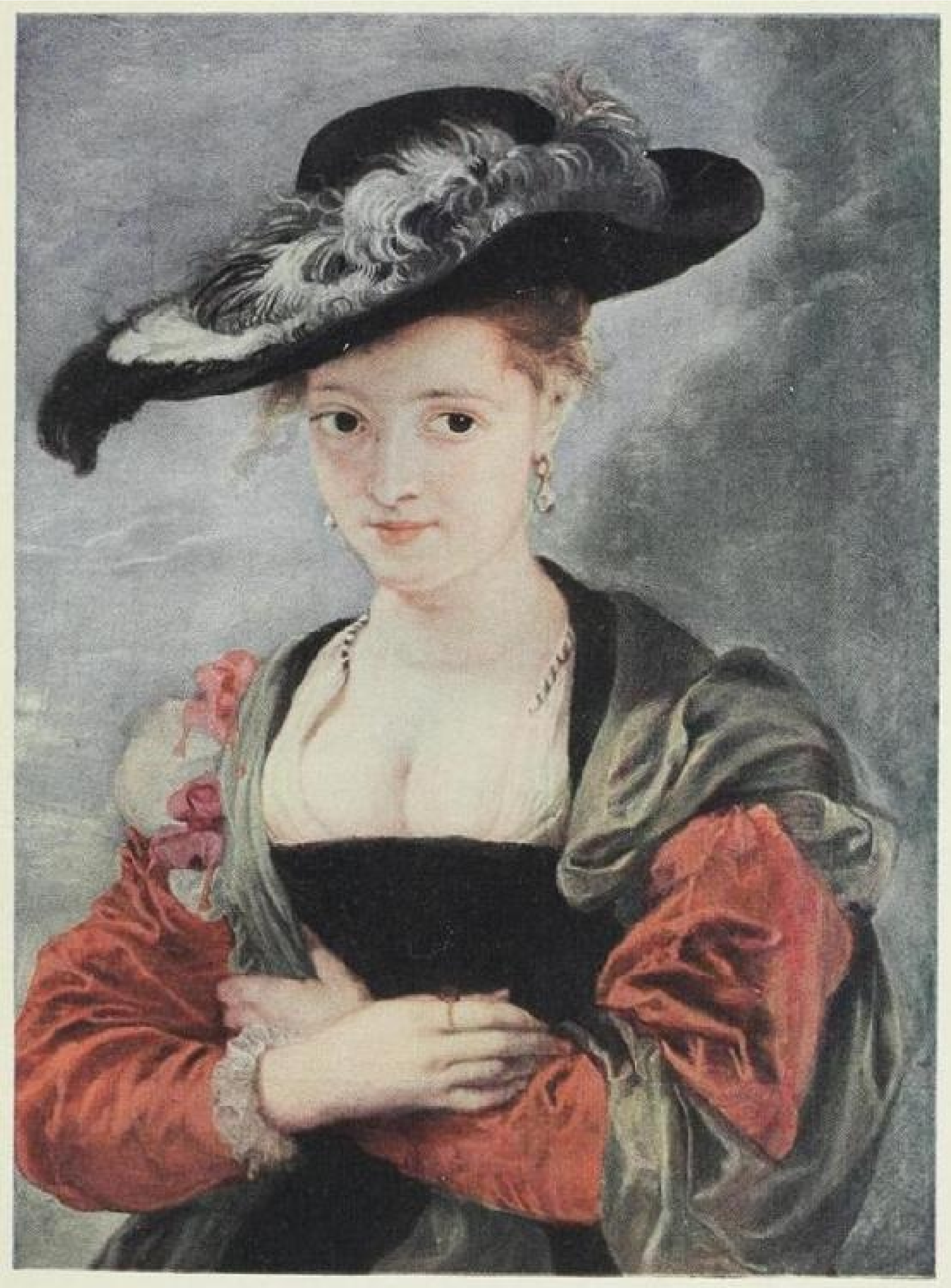
Peter Paul lived with his beloved brother Philip, to whose influence we are probably justified in tracing the first two commissions that were given to the young painter. One was to take part in the work of re-decorating the Town Hall, the other was to prepare an altar-piece for the Church of St. Walpurga. For the Town Hall Rubens painted the first of his long series of “Adorations,” and though it is emphatically one of the works of his first period, and is far from expressing the varied qualities that have given him enduring fame, it created sufficient sensation in Antwerp to bring him the position of Court painter, with a definite salary and a special permission to remain in the city of his choice. Had he been a lesser man he would have been called away to attend the Court in Brussels.

PLATE

V. — LE CHAPEAU DE PAILLE
(In the National Gallery)

This is a

portrait of Suzanne Fourment, a sister of the painter’s second wife, painted when the sitter was about twenty-one years old. The serenity of the girl’s mind is admirably expressed in this sparkling work, and is one of Rubens’ successful essays in portraiture. Another study of Suzanne Fourment may be seen in Vienna.



Undoubtedly

Rubens was a patriot, a man to whom the fallen fortunes of his city appealed very strongly. We must never forget that the endless wars stirred up by Spanish ambition had roused the best instincts of patriotism the world over, and though Rubens was not a warrior, he was a statesman and a patriot, who knew that his hands and brain could serve his city in their own effective fashion, one in no way inferior in its results to that of the fighting men. Perhaps we may trace to all the mental disturbance of this era the artist's first great transition, for the Rubens who painted in Antwerp after his return from Italy and gave the "Descent from the Cross" to his city, is quite a different man from the one who painted the earlier pictures. He has matured and developed, has completed the period of assimilation through which all creative artists must pass, has gathered from the talents, from the genius of the men he has studied, the material for founding a style of his own. He begins to speak with his own voice.

It is well

that Rubens' industry was on a par with his talents, for commissions poured in upon him in the first years of his return from Italy. They came not singly but in battalions, and very soon we find Peter Paul Rubens following the fashion of his time and establishing a studio school. Naturally enough there were plenty of young men who wished to become his pupils, and plenty of old ones who had just missed distinction and were anxious for any work that was remunerative.

Rubens realised that if he could but turn their gifts to the best advantage they would at least be as valuable to him as he could be to them. Consequently he responded to the suggestions that were made to him on every side, and gathered the cleverest unattached men of his city to the studio, giving each one his work to do. Let us place to his credit the fact that there was no disguise about this procedure, it was open and unabashed. Rubens would even send pupils to start a work that had been commissioned, and would not appear on the scene until the first outline of the picture was on the canvas. Then he would come along and with a few unerring strokes correct or supplement the composition, to which his pupils could pay their further attentions. Rubens received high prices for his work, but would give his name to a picture in return for a comparatively low fee, if the purchaser would but be content to have his design and leave the painting to pupils. It may be said that Rubens was always fortunate in his selection of assistants, just as he was fortunate in other affairs of life. The great Vandyck was among those who worked in his studio, Snyders the celebrated animal painter was another; it is said that Rubens never touched his work.

Like the

Florentine painters of the Renaissance, Rubens was by no means satisfied to devote himself entirely to paint. He had been greatly impressed during his sojourn in Italy by the extraordinary beauty of the palaces of Genoa — a beauty, be it added, that charms us no less to-day when time has added its priceless gifts to the architects’ design. Rubens published a book on the Genoese palaces, with something between fifty and one hundred drawings of his own, most carefully made. He found time to make illustrations for the famous Plantin Press, to which we have referred already. He superintended the work of engraving his own pictures, and in short showed himself a man competent to grasp more than the common burden of interests, and to deal with them all with a rare intelligence coupled with sound business instinct. Although the painter’s education had not been great, he had acquired scholarship at a time when classical education was considered of the very highest value, and no man who lacked it could claim to be regarded as a gentleman. He maintained correspondence with friends in the great cities of Europe, and as he had great personal attractions and a perfect charm of manner with which to support his industry and achievements, there is small need to wonder at his progress.

Success would indeed have been a fickle jade had she refused to surrender to such wooing.

IV. THE LATER

YEARS

When the painter had passed his fortieth year he received a commission from the Dowager Queen Maria de Medici to paint certain panels for her palace in Paris, and in order to see them properly placed and to get a comprehensive idea of the scheme of decoration, he betook himself with the first part of his finished work to the French capital. There is no doubt that Rubens was already regarded in the governing circles of Antwerp as something more than a painter. His relations with the ruling house had brought him into touch with diplomatic developments — he had handled one or two with extreme tact, delicacy, and success. The Infanta Isabel relied upon him in seasons of emergency, and although the political value of his first visit to Paris in 1623 cannot be gauged, it is fairly safe to assume that his second visit to the capital two years later was far more concerned with politics than paint. To put before the reader a brief story of the complications of the political situation between France, Spain, and the Low Countries would make impossible demands upon strictly limited space, but those who wish to understand something of the politics of his time may be referred to the works of Emile Michel and Max Rooses on Peter Paul Rubens and his time.

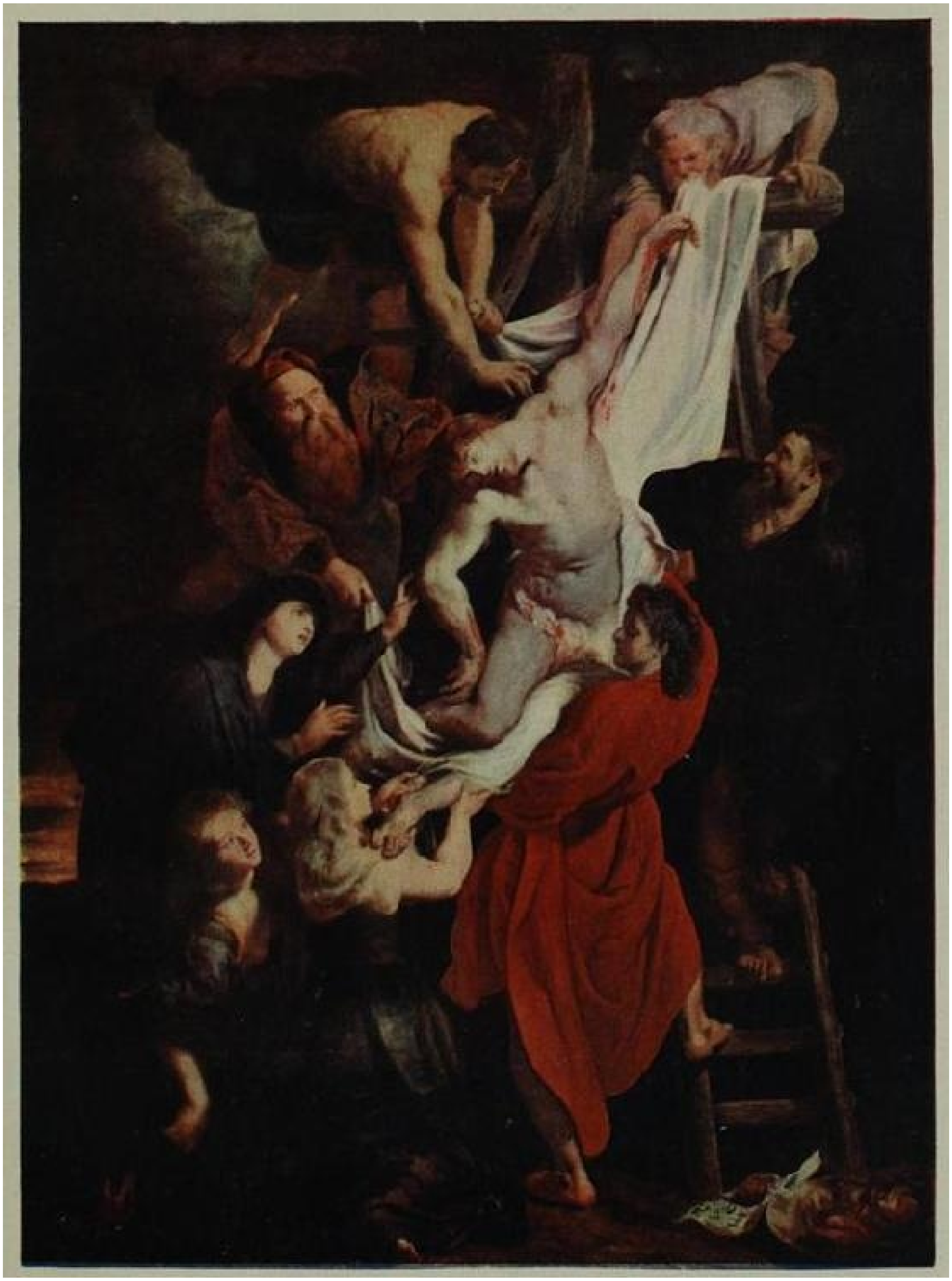
They will find there far more historical and biographical matter than can be referred to in this place. Suffice it to say that from 1625 Rubens must be regarded as a diplomatist quite as much as a painter, but curiously enough the development of the political side of his life did nothing to destroy the quality of his painting. In fact he seems to have travelled along the road of diplomacy to his best and latest manner, to have seen life more clearly, and the problems of his art more intelligently than before, to have brought to his work something of the quality that we call genius. The one gift that the gods denied him was poetic fancy, a quality that would have kept him from the portrayal of types and incidents that we are apt to regard, with or without justification, as ugly, that would have made his classicism pleasing to eyes that read it at its true value. But Rubens was one of the men who have to fight, not against failure but against success; and the shrewd practical nature that made him what he was served as an effective barrier against acquisition of the qualities that would have lifted him to the region that always remained just beyond his reach.

PLATE

VI. — THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

(In the Cathedral, Antwerp)

Here we have Rubens in his most realistic mood and in all his strength. Not only is the composition of a very complicated picture quite masterly and the colour scheme most happily distributed, but the contrast in the expression on the faces round the dead Christ is expressed in most dramatic fashion. The eye and the mind see the tragic drama at the same moment; although the subject had been treated hundreds of times already, the painter found it possible to give the theme a fresh and enduring expression.



1628 was a

very interesting year in the painter’s life, for he was sent on a mission to the

Court of Spain, where he met Velazquez, who was instructed to show him all the art treasures of the capital. What would we not give to-day for an authentic account of the conversations that these men must have held together?

Rubens was at the zenith of his fame, if not of his achievement, Velazquez was unknown save in Seville and Madrid, and was fighting against every class of disadvantage on the road to belated recognition. Let those who sneer at Rubens and can find no good about him, remember that he it was who turned Velazquez' attention to Italy. Rubens found time to paint portraits of several members of the royal family, and these works are fine likenesses enough, though they do not pretend to rival Velazquez' achievements in the same field. The diplomatic business was conducted with so much skill that Philip entrusted his visitor with a mission to Paris and London. In the last-named city Rubens was received by Charles I., who conferred a knighthood upon him, and approved of his commission to decorate the banqueting-chamber at Whitehall.

Back again in Antwerp, Rubens found his talents sorely tried by the diplomatic developments in which the restless ambition of Maria de Medici involved all the countries subject directly or indirectly to her influence. He found himself compelled to go twice to Holland in the early thirties, but the death of the Infanta Isabel in 1633 removed him awhile from the heated arena of politics. Rubens prepared Antwerp for the visit of the Archduke Ferdinand, the Spanish governor, the city being decorated for this occasion at a cost of 80,000 florins. The work was so successful that the Archduke paid a special visit of congratulation to the artist, who was laid up in his room by an attack of gout. Two or three years later, some warnings that his strength would not hold out much longer availed to turn Rubens from the life of Courts and capitals, and he purchased for himself the Château de Stein, a very beautiful estate that is preserved for us by the delightful picture in the National Gallery. There he settled down for awhile to fulfil certain commissions for the King of Spain, and doubtless had he been permitted to remain in retirement his health would have been the better and his life the longer. But Antwerp could not dispense with the services of her painter-diplomat, and many a time when he would have been in his studio working at his ease, some urgent message from the city would drag him away. In the winter of 1639 he passed some months in Antwerp, working as best he could in the intervals of severe attacks of gout. The King of Spain's commission was still unfinished, and some feeling that he himself would never be able to complete it led Rubens to engage a larger number of assistants than usual, and to content himself with directing their efforts and supplementing them as occasion arose. He seems to have known that death was near, for he made his will and prepared to meet the end. It came with May in 1640, when the painter was in the sixty-fourth year of a brilliant and useful life.

Rubens was twice married, first to Isabel Brandt, who became his wife when she was eighteen and he was thirty-two, shortly after his return to Antwerp from the service of the Duke of Mantua. A portrait of the two sons this wife bore him may be seen in Vienna. Isabel Brandt did not live to see her boys, Albert and Nicholas, grow to manhood. She died in 1626, some say from the plague that swept Antwerp in that year. Four years later the painter married the beautiful Helena Fourment, when he was fifty-four and she was sixteen, and she survived him. He seems to have been a good and affectionate husband and father. In fact, it is hard to find among the biographers of Rubens anybody who speaks ill of the artist as a man.

V. THE PAINTER’S ART

Turning from a survey of Rubens’ life to a consideration of his art, the three divisions to which his work groups itself naturally, are very clearly seen. Up to the time of his marriage with Isabel Brandt his work may be referred to the first division, and in art it may be said that no man’s earliest pictures are of much consequence save for their promise of higher things. They do little more than mark his progress, record impressions he has received from strong personalities, and mark his own path through the influences of different schools and varied appeals, to the complete expression of himself. Rubens was never a slavish imitator, he never assumed the mantles of the men he admired, as so many great painters have done. Goya, for example, was a man whose range of thought and capacity for receiving impressions were so great that he has painted after the manner of half-a-dozen masters, and there are pictures to be seen in Madrid to-day that are painted with Goya’s brush and recall Fragonard.

Such instances may be multiplied, and Rubens is to be admired for the restraint that marked this side of his early work.

From the time of his marriage down to the season when he became recognised on all sides as a diplomatist, let us say roughly from 1610 to 1626, we get the second period, and to this may be referred the greater part of the work that has given offence — the presentation of the coarsest types of men and women in a state of nature — the treatment of some of the grossest incidents in mythological stories in fashion that leaves nothing to the imagination.

We are justified in asking ourselves whether the extraordinary development of the painter’s social and political life did not avail to arrest in late middle age any tendencies he might otherwise have had to express still further the coarser side of classical subjects. By the time he reached the forties, Rubens was the companion and even the trusted counsellor of princes and rulers. Such refinement as Western Europe boasted was to be met in the circles he frequented. The greatest work of the greatest masters was within his reach, and he had travelled to the point at which a man is able to select as well as to admire, at which he can distinguish clearly between the points that make for a picture’s strength and those that detract from it.

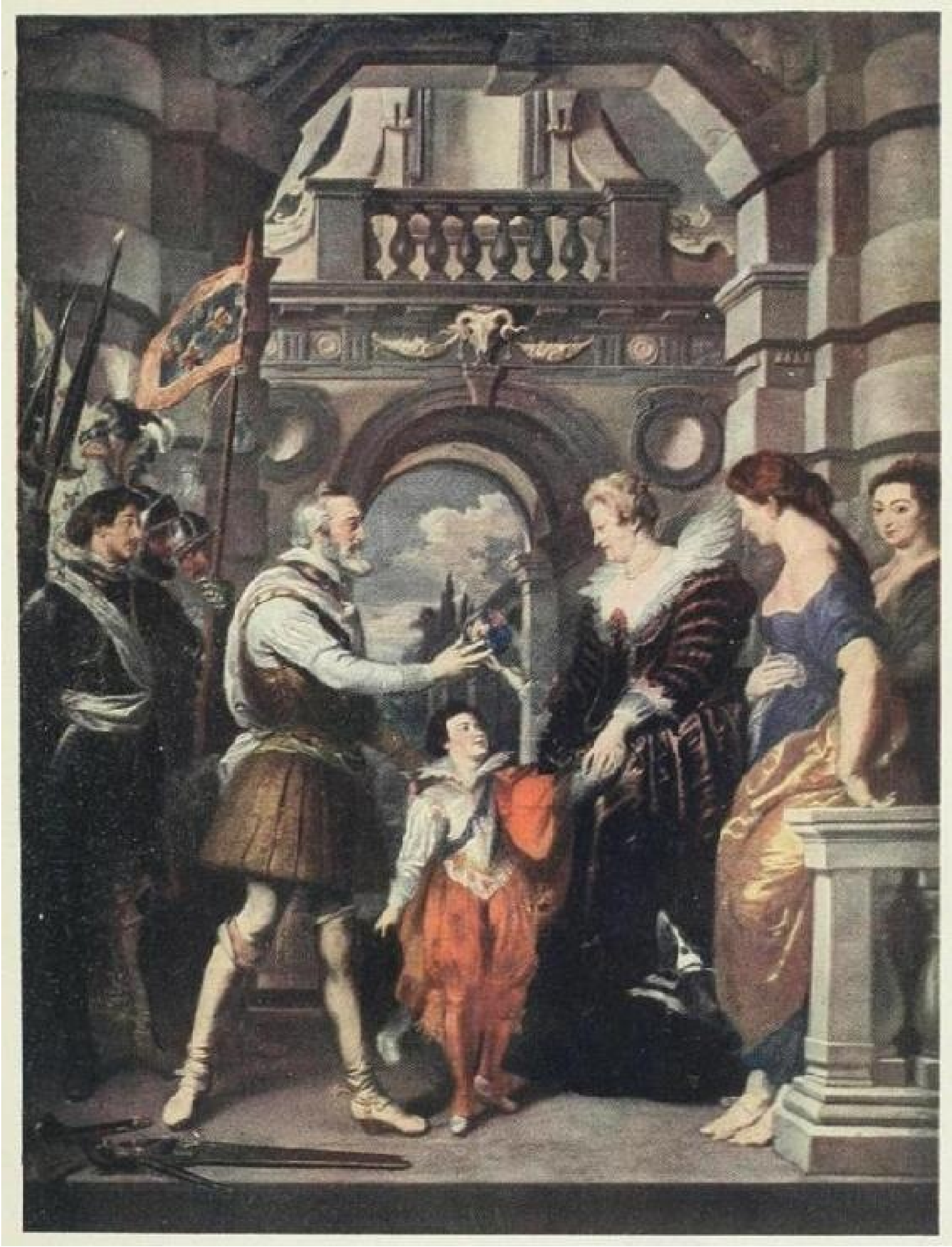
PLATE

VII. — HENRY IV. LEAVING FOR A CAMPAIGN

(In the Louvre)

Here the

painter, leaving mythology and allegory for a time, is seen in one of his most effective historical pictures. Henry IV., who is leaving for the war in Germany, is seen conferring upon his Queen the charge of the kingdom.



Rubens on

arriving in Italy in the days when he had first taken service under the Duke of Mantua, was doubtless unduly impressed by Michel Angelo and Raphael. On no other grounds can we account for the delight that his earliest pictures manifest in the portrayal of massive and even ugly limbs. Doubtless he was influenced too by Titian, though we cannot agree that it was his admiration for the master that made him copy the King's Titians in the Prado, for it is more probable that on this occasion he simply obeyed instructions. Moreover, Rome appealed to him more than Venice did. The wistful purity of a Bellini Madonna, the exquisite loveliness of a Bellini child or cherub, left him unmoved, but a Titian or a Tintoretto at its biggest, if not at its best, pleased him, and when he came in Rome to the works of Raphael and Michel Angelo he would seem to have looked no further for inspiration. Doubtless he heard many interesting theories of art in Rome, where, as we have said, Caravaggio, who wielded considerable influence in the art world, was among his friends. But Rubens thought out things for himself, and learned to quell his own instincts and to subdue his own faults as they were revealed to him.

Violence is

perhaps the characteristic of Rubens' early work. He has the grand manner without the grand method, his contrasts of light and shade and even of colour amuse where they do not offend, and his drawing is by no means remarkable or inspired. At best it is correct. We feel that we cannot see the wood because of the trees, that the blending has not been sufficiently skilful to bring about proportion and harmony, and that the expression of a giant form with prize-fighter's muscles in the foreground of a canvas is sufficient to fill the painter with a delight that enables him happily to ignore the rest. It is the enthusiasm of clever youth, the youth of a man in whose veins there is enough and to spare of very healthy blood, in whose mental equipment refinement has been overlooked.

The death of

his mother, the distressful plight of his favourite city, the responsibility of his commissions, his marriage and the fruits of his Italian travel brought about the second period, and started the traditions that give Antwerp a school and a name in the history of European art. The violence passes slowly from the canvases, the straining after effect that is so obvious and often so unpleasing in the earlier pictures goes with it. The chiaroscuro is more subdued and consequently more pleasing, only in the handling of colour the painter is still clumsy and heavy. Rubens, the great colourist, seems to have been born when the artist was more than forty years old.

Some of the

best work of the second period is in Antwerp and Brussels, but it is to be found scattered all over Europe, and there are examples in private collections in this country. Perhaps the dominant impression that these works leave is one of certain difficulties created to be overcome. Just as the painter in his first manner revelled in his strength, so in his second period he rejoices in his skill. It was left to the later years to weld strength and skill into the service, on pictures that could stand for both and emphasise neither. Mythology continued to hold him, indeed we must never forget that Rubens lived in the age of pseudo-classicism, and is to be counted among its victims. To his second period belongs such work as the disgusting “Procession of Silenus” now in Munich, a picture in which the grossness of the theme is only rivalled by the vulgarity of the treatment. Some of Rubens’ apologists have held that this class of work was painted as a protest against vice, but such apologies are far-fetched. Rubens needs no apologist. Consider his work as a whole, and what is good dwarfs what is bad. Doubtless, had he been able in the later days to re-possess and destroy some of his more tainted pictures, he would have done so. It will be remarked by all who know Rubens’ work intimately, that throughout his life he was happier with a Venus than a Madonna, more at home with some great classical figure, than with the picture of Christ. He did not respond to Christianity in the sense that the Venetians responded to it, he could not for all his reputation have painted a Madonna as Bellini did, and there is no reason to believe that he would have cared to do so. Then again we may not forget that Rubens the artist, and Rubens the courtier, and Rubens the special envoy, were closely associated with Rubens the man of business, who would always have painted for choice the work likely to find immediate acceptance. There were times when some legend of Saint or Martyr moved him strangely, and he turned to it with a measure of inspiration not often excelled by the greatest of the Renaissance artists; but these occasions were rare, although Antwerp preserves one of the most effective results of such inspiration in the “Last Communion of St. Francis.” It may be remarked in this place that to see Rubens at his best, one must not go to the National Gallery or to the Louvre or to the Prado — Antwerp and Vienna hold some of the finest examples of his second and third manner. And we must never forget that Art is concerned with treatment, and that subject is of secondary interest to artists.

When he

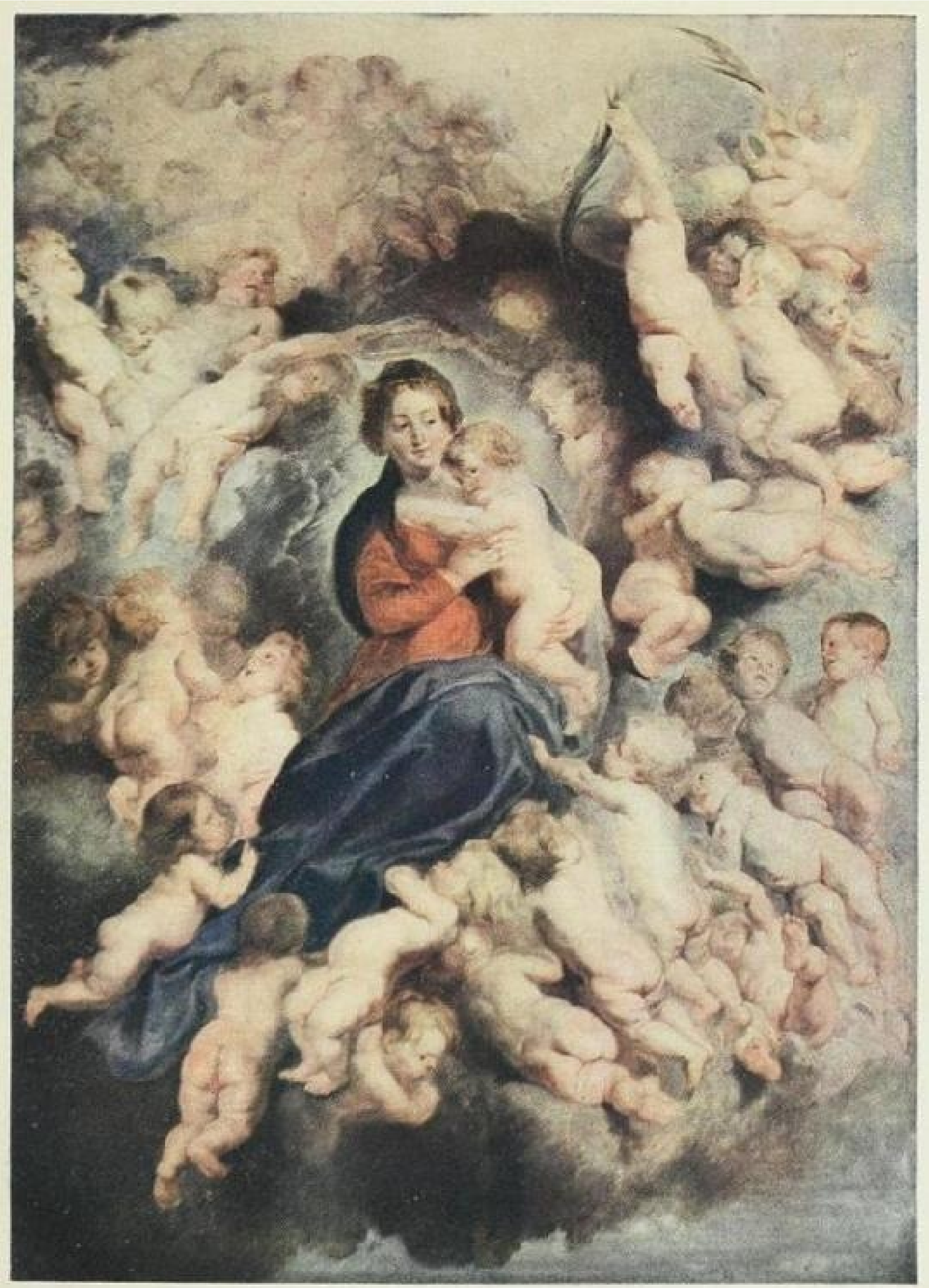
became recognised as a diplomatist whose services were required by Europe’s greatest potentates, Rubens had passed the meridian of life. He had known prosperity from the very earliest days, he had no occasion to paint pictures of the sort so admirably summed up by the offensive word “pot-boiler.” Kings and Queens and Emperors were offering him commissions, he was, if we may say so, on his best behaviour. He rose to the height of every great occasion. The commission that Maria de Medici gave him for her palace seems to have brought him to his third and latest manner, and from that year until death overtook him Rubens was one of the great masters of European art. If we could eliminate all the pictures of his first manner and a considerable portion of those belonging to his middle period, his claims would hardly be denied by the representatives and supporters of any school. He seems to have received added inspiration from his child wife, and there are few more delightful pictures than one to be seen in Munich in which Rubens and Helena Fourment are walking from their garden to their château. Perhaps even in the later days woman was nothing more than a thing of beauty for a man’s delight, and man was no more than a godlike animal, but a well-defined measure of refinement was always beyond their painter’s mental or artistic conceptions. It is sufficient for us that the appeal of nature came to him with great strength. The Château of Stein in our National Gallery and the Rainbow Landscape in the Wallace Collection gives sufficient evidence of this, while such a work as the Garden of Venus in the Prado suggests the limitations that were with him throughout his life. It is fair to say that in the later years they were not expressed so prominently in his work.

PLATE

VIII. — THE VIRGIN AND THE HOLY INNOCENTS
(In the Louvre)

In this

picture Rubens allows his brush to run away with him as though for sheer joy in its capacity. Perhaps his study of the Virgin is a little commonplace, a little too suggestive of the exuberance of Flanders rather than the refinement and spirituality of Nazareth. But the studies of the Holy Innocents are a delight, and make the canvas supremely attractive. It will be seen that the grouping of the children results in every possible difficulty that an artist may have to face, but that Rubens has encountered them all with sure, hard, and steady eye, in fashion worthy of Tintoretto himself.



Finally we

have to consider and acknowledge his triumphs as a colourist. It may be said that Rubens, for all his gifts, required more than twenty years of unremitting labour to obtain his mastery over colour,

but when once it was his he retained the gift to the last hour. In the early days Rubens as a colourist was a person of no importance, the grossness of his composition and the tameness of his drawing were not redeemed by the handling of pigment. In the second period the use of paint is far more skilled, but it does not blend, neither does it glow. In the later years it acquires both gifts, and the exquisitely luminous quality of some of his pictures, the marvellous delicacy of flesh tint, that must have astonished and delighted his patrons, is preserved to us to-day. In fact it may be said that Rubens has preserved his colour to a larger extent than many great painters who came after him. He is far more reliable in this aspect of his art than is our own Sir Joshua, whose portraits have long ceased to tell the story they must have told to delighted and flattered sitters. It was no effort of genius that made Rubens a supreme colourist in the later years. He came to his kingdom by dint of sheer hard work, but for his painstaking devotion to labours such results could not have been achieved.

The spirit of

the Renaissance travelled very slowly from Italy to the Netherlands, and that its influence was felt in the sixteenth century did not lead to any very marked divergence from the traditions that the art of the Netherlands was following.

Italian form and Italian sentiment met with little response there, and there is no doubt that the eighty years of conflict with Spain which led to the recognition of the Republic, turned men’s thoughts away from art. By the time it was possible to revive a school, the Netherlands were looking to life rather than to faith, and even the classicism of the period that turned Rubens towards pictures illustrating mythological incidents could not help him to create imaginary figures. This is as it should have been, for it made eighteenth-century art what it was through the influence of Rubens and Vandyck.

He filled his canvas with the types he saw around him, and while nobody will dispute the virtue of the Netherlands, there will be few found to assert that it produced the Latin type of womanhood. The people of the Netherlands do not belong to the Latin races; that is why they did not respond earlier to the Renaissance, that is why they look at what seems to be their worst rather than their best in some of Rubens’ most ambitious works. Yet by reason of his long sojourn and hard study in Italy, Rubens did do something considerable to bring Italian art and tradition into the Netherlands. and if he could not establish it there, the cause of failure was that the genius of the country was opposed to it. Among the painters who worked for Rubens or were greatly influenced by him the best known are Anthony Vandyck, Frans Snyders, Abraham Janssens, Jacob Jordaens, and Jan Van Den Hoecke. Then again, of course, it must not be forgotten that he exercised a very great influence upon David Teniers, and that he served the interests of art development far more than he could have done by giving fresh life to an art form that had served its time and purpose.

Rubens the

landscape painter, the painter of religious and mythological subjects, has rather obscured Rubens the portrait painter, and this is not as it should be, for many will be inclined to agree that it is as a portrait painter that Rubens was often at his best. Visitors to Florence will not forget the portrait group entitled “The Philosophers,” that may be seen in the Pitti Palace. Our Wallace Collection has a delightful portrait of Isabel Brandt, and the National Gallery holds the portrait of Suzanne Fourment, “Le Chapeau de Paille,” while Amsterdam and other cities hold portraits of his second wife, the famous portrait of Gervatius is to be seen in Antwerp, and there are several delightful examples of his portraiture in Brussels. It was in these schools of art that Rubens has succeeded in pleasing many who turn with feelings not far removed from disgust from his unshrinking studies of the coarse overblown or overgrown womanhood. He contrived either to confer a measure of dignity upon his sitters or to conserve one. His portraits of his two wives, and the portrait group in the Pitti Palace that introduces his brother, are full of a deep feeling for which we may look in vain to many of his larger canvases. Just as the pianist or violinist will turn from playing some wonderful concerto bristling with difficulties for the soloist and calculated to delight the ears of the groundlings, and then taking up some simple piece by a great master will infuse into it all the qualities that the showy concerto hid, so Rubens turned from the wars and loves of gods and goddesses, from Bacchic carnivals and groups in which nudity is insisted upon sometimes at the expense of relevance, and would paint portraits that will be a delight as long as they remain with us. Rubens painting the portrait of wife or brother or friend, and Rubens covering vast canvases with glittering and sometimes meretricious work are two different men. We may admire the latter, but we come near to intimate appreciation of the former. In the portraits the man is revealed, in the big pictures we see no more than artist, and some of us fail to realise how clever he is, how many problems of composition and tone and light and shade he has grappled with and overcome in manner well-nigh heroic.

The secret of

his changing moods is of course beyond us, but perhaps one may hazard an explanation for the difference in the quality of the work done. As far as we can see from a study of the painter’s work and life, he approached mythology and Christianity from a purely pictorial standpoint, and did not believe in one or the other. “The Procession to Calvary,” “The Crucifixion,” “The Descent from the Cross,” “The Flight into Egypt,” “The Adoration of the Magi,” “The Draught of Fishes,” “The Raising of the Cross,” “The Assumption of the Virgin,” “The Last Supper,” “The Circumcision,” “The Flagellation,” and the rest, were no more and no less to him as subjects than “The Drunken Hercules” or “The Battle of the Amazons,” “The Garden of Venus” or “The Judgment of Paris.” They were popular subjects for effective treatment, pictures that would make a sure appeal to those who loved either the sacred or the profane in art, pictures to be executed with all possible skill at the greatest possible speed, and with a measure of assistance regulated by the price that was to be paid for them. But the portraits of his friends, of the brother he loved, and of the wives to whom he was a devoted husband, stood on quite a different plane. He felt the human interest attaching to them, and this human interest brought to his canvas certain qualities that belong to the heart rather than the head, and have given them a claim that is not disputed even by the painter’s most severe critics.

RUBENS by Jennie Ellis Keysor

PETER

PAUL RUBENS. 1577–1640.

In our study of

Raphael, we had a glimpse of the golden age of art in Italy. In our work on Murillo, we saw what Spain was able to produce in pictures when the whole of Europe seemed to be trying its hand at painting. Moving north, we are to see in this sketch what the little country now known as Belgium produced in the same lines. For this we need hardly take more than the one name, Peter Paul Rubens, for he represented very completely the art of Flanders or Belgium, as we call it to-day.

If we love to

read of happy, fortunate people, as I am sure we do, we shall be more than pleased in learning about Rubens. You know there is an old story, that by the side of every cradle stand a good and an evil fairy, who by their gifts make up the life of the little babe within. The good fairy gives him a wonderful blessing, perhaps it is the power to write poems or paint pictures. Then the bad fairy, ugly little sprite that he is, adds a portion of evil, perhaps it is envy that eats the soul like a canker. And so they alternate, the good and evil, until the sum of a human life is made up, and the child grows up to live out his years, marked by joy and sorrow as every life must be.

As we look at

the men and women about us we feel, often, that one or the other of these fairies must have slept while distributing their gifts and so lost a turn or two in casting in the good or ill upon the babe, so happy are some lives, so sorrowful are others. At Rubens’ cradle the evil fairy must well nigh have forgotten his task, for the babe grew up one of the most fortunate of men.

In order to understand as we should any great man, we must always study his country and his time. No man can be great enough not to be like the nation that produced him, or the time when he came into the world. For these reasons we love to study a man’s time and country, and, indeed, find it quite necessary if we would understand him aright.

It is impossible to think of Rubens without associating him with Flanders and with Antwerp, his home city. Here, then, is just a little about the history of this most interesting country: One of the richest possessions of Spain in the sixteenth century was known as the Netherlands. When the doctrines of Luther began to spread many of the Netherlanders accepted them. Philip II., the terrible and gloomy king of Spain, seized this opportunity to persecute them cruelly. Many of them resisted, and then Philip sent his unscrupulous agent, the Duke of Alva, to make the people submit. This he partially accomplished by the greatest cruelty. The northern provinces, which we know as Holland, declared their independence. The southern, of which Flanders was the most flourishing province, longed so for peace and the prosperity that accompanies it, that they submitted to Spain. The people then grew rich as weavers, merchants and traders. Splendid cities like Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp became the seats of commerce and their artists and workmen of all sorts were known throughout Europe for their thrift and the excellence of their workmanship. We recall how Raphael’s cartoons were sent to Flanders to be copied in tapestry the finest in the world.

Of all the cities dear to Flemish hearts Antwerp was, perhaps, the most beautiful and the most prosperous. It was situated on the river Scheldt about twenty miles from the sea. In the time of its greatness one might count almost at any time twenty-five hundred ships and boats riding at anchor in front of the city, and within her walls, two hundred thousand people lived in plenty. There were marble palaces, beautiful churches, a magnificent town hall (Hotel de Ville); and the houses of the humble showed by their cleanlines and comfortable surroundings that enjoyment of life was restricted to no one class.

This matter

of religious faith, however, was bound to come up again and bring, as it proved, ruin upon the city. A body of people who thought it wrong to have pictures and statues of saints, and of Mary and her Son, gathered together and for four days went from one Flemish town to another and destroyed everything of the sort to be found in the churches. Four hundred places of worship were desecrated, many of them within the city of Antwerp. Because of their zeal against the use of so-called *images* they were called *Iconoclasts*.

If formerly

they had been punished for *thinking* things against the established religion of the State, what now could be expected when they had *done* such sacrilegious things?

“Again the whiskered Spaniard all the land with terror smote;
And again the wild alarum sounded from the tocsin’s throat.”

Our

imagination cannot picture things so terrible as were perpetrated upon the inhabitants of Antwerp for their part in the destruction of the “images.” This terrible event is known in history as *The Spanish Fury*.

Thousands of her people were killed, most of her palaces were burned, and the treasure of her wealthy citizens was stolen. Property was confiscated to the Spanish Government. Death and terror, theft and rapine reigned in the beautiful city of the Scheldt. When the dead were buried, the charred ruins of buildings removed, and the Spanish soldiery withdrawn, the mist-beclouded Netherland sun shone out on a dead city which even to-day bears marks of the Spaniard’s fury.

Grass grew in what had been its busiest streets, trade almost ceased, and thousands of weavers and other artisans went to England where they could pursue their vocations unmolested.

Philip was

apparently satisfied with the chastisement he had inflicted. He began to restore the confiscated property to its rightful owners, and to encourage the industry he had so cruelly destroyed. He even made Flanders an independent province under had so cruelly destroyed. He even made Flanders an independent province under the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella. Although peace had returned and a degree of prosperity again prevailed, yet many other things were irretrievably gone, and the people lived every day in the sight of painful reminders of their former greatness.

In art, too,

these low country provinces had made much progress. There had been Hubert and Jan Van Eyck who had painted with minute skill devout pictures. They had, moreover, given to the world the process of painting in oils. This discovery, worked out with the extreme care natural to the Netherlanders, changed the whole character of painting, and made it possible to have such colorists as Titian, Raphael and Rubens. We must remember that the colors used in fresco painting were mixed with a sort of “size” and that they had none of the richness of oil colors. There had been other artists of note besides the Van Eycks. Hans Memling, with the spirit of a real poet, had painted his sweet visions, and to-day it is not for the opulent merchants who added fame and wealth to their city in their time, but for this poet-painter, Memling, that we venerate the ancient and stately city of Bruges. Quentin Matsys, the brawny blacksmith, who, for love of an artist’s daughter, became a painter, comes to our minds as a name of no mean fame in the early records of Flemish painting.

The guild

system, where every class of artisans was organized for protection and for the production of good work, touched even the fine arts. No man could set up for a good painter who had not served his apprenticeship, and whose work was not satisfactory to experts. When Rubens was born he came as the heir of all that had been accomplished before him. He only carried on what his predecessors had begun, but he carried it on in a matchless way so that he was able to leave to succeeding painters not only all he had inherited, but a goodly legacy besides — the legacy of a pure life, a glowing, natural, vigorous art. It seems to me that right here is a lesson for us. May we not add our mite, tiny though it be, to the ever-growing volume of truth? I like this quotation in this connection, and I hope you may see its beauty too— “The vases of truth are passed on from hand to hand, and the golden dust must be gathered into them, grain by grain, from the infinite shore.”

Rubens’ birth

took place in 1577, the year following the Spanish Fury. When he was only seven, William the Silent, the saviour and protector of the northern provinces, was assassinated at the instance of Philip II. When he was eleven, the Spanish *Armada*, the proudest fleet that ever sailed the seas, sent to invade England and punish Queen Elizabeth, was scattered by wind and wave and dashed to pieces on alien rocks. The Reformation was well established in England and Holland, while France, led by Henry IV., was yet uncertain whether or not to accept the new doctrines. Such were some of the portentous events that marked the advent and early years of the greatest of Flemish painters.

The family of Rubens' father had lived for years in Antwerp, but when Luther's doctrines were put forward Jan Rubens, the father of our artist, believed in them. For this reason he was compelled to flee from the city, and his property was confiscated. He went to the little village of Siegen, in western Germany, where his illustrious son was born on June 29th, 1577. His birth was on the day dedicated to the saints, Peter and Paul, and so his parents gave the child their names. After the residence of a year in this little town, the family removed to Cologne, where they lived for ten years, until the death of the father.

Jan Rubens was a lawyer and a learned man, and he took pains that his sons should be thoroughly educated. In addition to his heretical views regarding religion he had grievously offended William the Silent and so was doubly exiled. His wife remained with him, and by her efforts kept him from prison, and added cheer to his life of exile. This was the admirable Marie Pypeling, the mother so revered by Rubens, and so deserving the respect of all who know of her. A portrait of her by her son is given in this sketch. To her he owed his handsome face, his strong physique, his shrewdness and his love of order.

Immediately after the death of her husband, Marie Pypeling and her family, now consisting of two sons and a daughter, returned to Antwerp. Her property, which had been confiscated in those wild days at Antwerp, was restored to her in the general restitution with which Philip tried to compensate the citizens for their losses in the Spanish Fury. From this time Rubens was an adherent of the Catholic Church.

The education

of Peter Paul, which was so carefully begun by his father, was continued by his mother, in a Jesuit College at Antwerp. He was an apt student and soon attained the elements from which he became a very learned man. He knew seven languages, was interested and learned in science and politics. All through his life he devoted some part of each day, however busy he was with his painting, to general reading. This, perhaps more than his early studies, accounts for his elegant scholarship.

His mother

was quite determined that this son should be, like his father, a lawyer. His own tastes, however, and a power to use the brush early displayed, decided otherwise. It very soon became evident that he was to be a painter — good or bad — who could tell in those early days?

In accordance

with a custom of the time, he was placed as a page in the house of a nobleman of Antwerp. To the talented and restless boy this life was intolerable, and he soon induced his mother to allow him to enter the studio of Van der Haeght, a resident artist of some repute and a close follower of Italian Art. He was only thirteen at this time. Here he learned to draw skillfully and, through the influence of his teacher, he acquired a love of landscape art which never left him.

From Van der

Haeght and his mild but correct art, Rubens, feeling his weakness in figure work, went to the studio of the irascible and forcible painter Van Noort, about whom critics have delighted to tell stories of brutality. However true these may be, Rubens stayed with him four years and never ceased to speak in praise of his master’s work. Here he became acquainted with Jordaens, who used often to paint the animals in Rubens’ landscapes.

From Van

Noort’s studio the restless Rubens went to study with Van Veen, who afterwards became court-painter. When the Archduke Albert and Isabella entered Antwerp in 1594, it was Van Veen who decorated the triumphal arches used on the occasion.

We may judge that he did the work well, for he was shortly selected to serve the new rulers as court painter. Rubens’ experience with Van Veen closed a ten years’ apprenticeship in the studios of Antwerp, and now he determined to go to Italy, where he could study the masters at first hand.

As a sort of

parting work and, perhaps, because he wished to impress more vividly on his mind those dear, strong features of his mother, he painted that portrait of her which we so much admire both for its subject and its art. This image of his mother was an effectual charm to carry with him in his travels — a charm to save him perhaps, from some of the stumbling places into which a handsome young man away from home might wander.

In May of

1600, after making all needful preparation, our artist set out on his journey.

It was natural that he should direct his steps first to Venice. Titian had but recently completed his productive life of nearly a century. His misty atmosphere, his intense interest in human life and, above all, his glowing color touched a kindred cord in Rubens’ nature. Then there were Tintoretto and Veronese, almost as interesting to our painter.

The Duke of

Mantua, a most liberal and discerning patron of art, was in Venice when Rubens reached that city. One of the Duke’s suite happened to be in the house with Rubens. He took notice of the painter’s courtly bearing, his fine physique, and his ability to paint, and introduced him to the Duke. Never did our painter’s handsome face and fine presence so quickly win a patron. He was at once attached to the Duke’s court and began copying for him the masterpieces of Italy — the pictures of Titian, Correggio, Veronese, leading all others. He also studied carefully the work of Julio Romano, Raphael’s famous pupil. He accompanied the Duke to Milan, where he copied Leonardo’s great picture, “*The Last Supper*,” besides doing some original work.

The Duke had observed Rubens’ courtly manner and his keen mind. He decided that the painter was just the person to send in charge of some presents to the King of Spain, whose favor he was anxious to gain. The gifts were made up of fine horses, beautiful pictures, rare jewels and vases. Early in 1603, the painter set out with his cavalcade, and after a stormy journey of about three months they reached the Court of Spain. He was cordially received and the gifts were delivered, although the pictures had been somewhat damaged by the rains which marked the last days of their trip. He was asked to paint several portraits of eminent personages of the court and he complied graciously.

He returned to Italy after somewhat more than a year’s absence. For some time he remained at Mantua to paint an altar-piece for the chapel where the Duke’s mother was buried.

Later he went to Rome where he studied carefully the works of Michael Angelo. In turn he visited all the great art cities of Italy except Naples. He stopped for some time at Florence, Bologna, and Genoa. At the last place he received so many orders for his work that he could not attend to them all. Everywhere he went the fame of “the Fleming,” as he was called in Italy, had gone before him. In many of the cities he made lengthy sojourns, copying the masterpieces that pleased him, and painting originals highly prized to-day in the galleries of Italy.

He had been in Italy eight years, when one day from over the Alps came a courier in hot haste bearing to Rubens the sad news that his mother lay at home very ill. Not even waiting for permission from his patron, the Duke, Rubens started north with a heavy heart, for he felt sure that he should never see his mother again.

Although he rode with all haste, as he neared his home city of Antwerp, he received the sad tidings he had so much dreaded. Marie Pypeling had died nine days before he left Italy. As was the custom in his country, he secluded himself for four months in a convent attached to the church where his mother was buried.

The profound sorrow for his mother, and the sudden change from the life he had so recently led made him melancholy. He longed for the skies, the pictures, and the society of Italy. When he came forth from his retirement, his countrymen could not bear the thought of their now illustrous artist returning to Italy. They wanted him among them to glorify with his splendid brush the now reviving city of the Scheldt.

The rulers of the city, Albert and Isabella, made him court painter and gave him a good salary. He accepted the office on condition that he should not have to live at the court. It was with some regret that he gave up returning to Italy, but the natural ties that bound him to Antwerp were stronger. He hoped that he might yet one day visit Italy. This part of his life-plan, however, he never carried out.

He was now thirty-two years old, respected of all men not only for his power as a painter, but for his sterling worth as a man. He had studied carefully the best art that the world could show, and he had absorbed into his own characteristic style what was best for him — his style of painting was now definitely formed. His fame as a painter was established from the Mediterranean to the Zuyder Zee. He was overwhelmed with orders for his pictures, so that he had plenty of money at his command. He had the confidence of princes, and was attached to one of the richest courts of Europe. A crowd of anxious art students awaited the choice privilege of entering his studio when he should open one. It would seem that there was little left for this man to desire in earthly things. The two he lacked he speedily procured, a good wife and a happy home, both destined to live always on the canvasses of this most fortunate of painters.

In 1610, he married the lovely and beautiful Isabella Brandt, the daughter of the Secretary of Antwerp. Happy indeed were the fifteen years of their life together, and often do we find the wife and their two boys painted by the gifted husband and father. We reproduce a picture of the two boys.

He bought a

house on Meir Square, one of the noted locations in Antwerp. He re-modelled it at great expense in the style of the Italians. In changing the house he took care that there should be a choice place to keep and display his already fine collection of pictures, statues, cameos, agates and jewels. For this purpose he made a circular room, lighted from above, covered by a dome somewhat similar to that of the Pantheon at Rome. This room connected the two main parts of the house and was, with its precious contents, a constant joy to Rubens and his friends. The master of this palace, for such it certainly was, lived a frugal and abstemious life, a most remarkable thing in an age of great extravagance in eating and drinking. Here is the record of one of his days in summer: At four o'clock he arose, and for a short time gave himself up to religious exercises.

After a simple breakfast he began painting. While he painted he had some one read to him from some classical writer, and if his work was not too laborious, he received visitors and talked to them while he painted. He stopped work an hour before dinner and devoted himself to conversation or to examining some newly acquired treasure in his collection. At dinner he ate sparingly of the simplest things and drank little wine. In the afternoon he again began his work at his easel, which he continued until evening. After an hour or so on a spirited Andalusian horse, of which he was always passionately fond, and of which he always had one or more fine specimens in his stables, he spent the remainder of the evening conversing with friends. A varied assembly of visitors loitered in this hospitable home. There were scholars, politicians, old friends — perhaps former fellow-pupils in Antwerp studios. Occasionally the princess Isabella came among the others, and Albert himself felt honored to stand as god-father to Rubens' son. Surely the wicked fairy *did* forget some of the evil he was to have mixed with this life!

It was in

connection with the building of this house that the best known and perhaps the greatest work of Rubens was painted: "*The Descent from the Cross,*" now in Antwerp Cathedral. It is said that in excavating for the foundation to some of the new parts of Rubens' house, the workmen unintentionally trespassed on some adjoining ground belonging to the gunsmiths' guild. In settlement for this Rubens was requested to paint a picture of St. Christopher, the Christ-Bearer, as they called him. Rubens complied with the request and painted what to us to-day would seem a very strange picture — a "triptych," that is a middle panel over which two narrow side panels, hinged to the middle one, could be closed.

He interpreted the request of the guild rather strangely too — he thought it would please them to represent in the several spaces of the triptych all who had ever carried Christ in their arms. In the middle panel we have the men removing the dead Christ from the cross, with the three Marys below, one of whom, the Magdalen, is, perhaps, the most beautiful woman Rubens ever painted.

The light is wonderful, coming, as it does, from the great white cloth in which they would wrap our Lord. The form of the dead Christ in its difficult position is a piece of masterly drawing. This panel is, of course, the principal part of the altar-piece. On one side of this was painted the Virgin visiting St. Anne, and on the other we have the aged St. Simeon presenting the Christ-Child in the temple. If we close these side panels over the middle one we find a space as large as the center panel. On this Rubens painted St. Christopher with the child and accompanied by a hermit carrying his lantern. Surely it was a good-natured artist and a glowing and generous soul who painted so much in response to a request for a St. Christopher!

There were,

however, trials for this fortunate man. There were those who were jealous of his fame and who said unkind things of him. In answer to their jealousies he only said, “Do well and you will make others envious; do better and you will master them.”

He was called

away from the home he loved so well. In 1619, when the truce, under which Antwerp had regained somewhat of her former greatness, was about to expire, Rubens was sent to Spain to renew it. He had hardly returned to Antwerp before Marie de Medicis, the wife of Henry IV. of France — the Henry of Navarre, of historic fame — sent for the artist to adorn her palace of the Luxemburg in Paris. He was to paint twenty-one pictures for this purpose. They were to describe the life of the queen. We give one of the series. He accomplished this entire work in glowing allegorical fashion in which mythological and historical personages are sadly confused at times. If there was occasionally this confusion, there were also present the artist’s strongest characteristics as a painter — rich color and vigorous human action.

While in

Paris he became intimately acquainted with the Duke of Buckingham, the favorite of Charles I. of England. This nobleman visited Rubens at his home in Antwerp and he was so pleased with the artist's collection that he offered him ten thousand pounds sterling for it complete. Rubens hesitated, for in the collection there were nineteen pictures by Titian, thirteen by Veronese, three by Leonardo, and three by Raphael, besides many of his own best works. The artist, however, was always thrifty, and he felt sure he could soon gather another collection, so he accepted the offer.

In 1626, his

lovely wife died. He mourned her deeply, saying "she had none of the faults of her sex." To beguile his time he accepted another diplomatic mission to Spain.

This time he was to secure a strong ally for Spain against the powerful Richelieu who then held France in his hand as it were. Incidentally he painted much while at Madrid. Among other work he copied the Titians which were likely to be taken out of the country at the marriage of the Infanta. At this time, too, he undoubtedly met Velazquez, the able and high-souled court painter of Philip IV. This was certainly one of the most notable meetings in the history of artists.

It was while

at the court of Madrid at this time that Jean of Braganza, afterward King of Portugal, invited the artist to visit him at his hunting-lodge, and Rubens set out with several of his followers, as was usual with travellers of note in those days. Before he reached the lodge Jean, hearing of so many attendants, and dismayed at the expense of entertaining them, departed suddenly for Lisbon.

He wrote Rubens a courteous letter telling him that *state business* detained him and begged him to accept some money to defray the expenses so far incurred on the journey. Rubens replied in like courteous manner and returned the money, saying that they had brought twenty times the amount with which to pay their expenses.

An

interesting story is related of their return. Overtaken by dark night in the open country they took shelter in a monastery. The next morning Rubens, with an eye always quick to see rare and interesting things, scanned the place carefully looking for something which might interest him. He was about to give up the search as hopeless, when he discovered in a dark corner a grand picture.

It represented in more than mortal fashion the beautiful things that a dead young man, painted in the foreground, had renounced. Rubens called the prior to him and begged to know the name of the artist of so masterly a work. The prior, an old, bowed man, refused saying, “He died to the world long ago. I cannot disclose his name.” Then the artist said, “It is Peter Paul Rubens who begs to know.” The prior started, for even in the remoteness of the isolated monastery the fame of that name had gone, and fell in a dead faint at the artist’s feet.

The attendants lifted the prior gently but he had ceased to live. Through the ashy pallor they saw the features of the young man in the picture yonder. They instinctively turned to look that they might more carefully compare the faces, and lo! like some cloud-vision, the picture had disappeared. Then they knew that the dead monk there had painted the canvas from the depth of his own experience.

From Madrid,

Rubens was sent to England in the interest of Spain. Here he was most kindly received by Charles I., who made him a knight and presented him with his own jeweled sword and a diamond ring. He also gave him a hat-band set with precious stones which was valued at two thousand pounds sterling. From London he went to Cambridge where the ancient university conferred on him its highest degree. In London he painted almost constantly. Among other commissions he was given that of decorating the dining room in Whitehall palace with nine pictures representing the life of James I. To make the person or events of this king’s life attractive must have been an immense task even for so supreme a genius as Rubens.

As he sat

painting one day a courtier entered and exclaimed, “Ah, his Majesty’s Ambassador occasionally amuses himself with painting.” “On the contrary,”

responded Rubens who was always proud of his art, “the painter occasionally amuses himself by trying to be a courtier.”

The influence

of Rubens’ visit to London must be counted rather as artistic than political.

It really was the beginning of that desire for collecting pictures and other things of the sort which has ever since distinguished the English nobility. On the Continent the price of pictures rose on account of England’s demand. For Charles I., Rubens bought the entire collection of the Duke of Mantua which he knew so well.

Rubens was tired of the almost fruitless mission at various courts and was glad to give up the business of an ambassador and return to Antwerp and to the life of a private gentleman. We must not forget that all these years Rubens was painting a great number of pictures in his ripest style. There was hardly a class of subjects or size of canvas which he could not skillfully use, although he always maintained that he could do his best work on large surfaces. There were religious pictures of Madonnas and saints all crowded with numerous figures and filled with vigorous human action. There were portraits such as those of his wives, of Elizabeth of France, or “*The Girl with a Straw Hat*,” which rank among the best of the world. There were wonderful animal pictures — hunting scenes, the excitement of which even to-day makes the cheek glow. There were historical scenes mingled with allegory. There were most beautiful children whose fat and agile bodies and whose laughing faces make us want to hug them. There were enchanting angels, and there were huge fauns and satyrs.

There were placid landscapes where, it may be, the artist’s soul, teeming with the life of all time, took its rest and recreation sporting with the nymphs of the woodland streams or with the frisky dryads of the trees.

In 1630, at the age of fifty-three, he married his second wife, Helen Fourmont, only sixteen years old. Like his first wife she was very beautiful, as his numerous portraits indicate. Five children came to them and the felicity of his early years with Isabella Brandt continued with his second wife.

The health of our painter gradually gave way. For many years he had suffered intensely from repeated attacks of gout. As he aged, these became more and more frequent and severe. Often the disease, working in his fingers, kept him from painting. “*The Death of St. Peter* ” was painted for Cologne Cathedral in 1635. It seems as if in his last years his heart turned affectionately to the city of his boyhood home and he would thus commemorate it. Another picture belongs to these last years. It was a family picture which he called “*St. George*.”

It represented four generations of the painter’s family and included both his first and his second wife. He himself figured as the Saint, clad in shining armor and triumphant over his late enemy, the deadly dragon. Rubens was too great to be conceited, but he stood at the end of a most successful life. If ever a man had conquered the dragon of disappointment, that lies crouching at the door of every life, Rubens had. He did well to represent himself as St. George. In both of these last pictures the painter shows at his very strongest.

He died May 30th, 1640, and was buried in the church beside his mother and his first wife.

All the city attended his funeral, for in three capacities they mourned their illustrious citizen — as an artist, as a diplomat and scholar, and as a man of noble character. Two years after his death the picture “*St. George* ” was hung above his tomb where it is found to-day.

He left great wealth which was largely represented by his collection of pictures and jewels.

There were three hundred and nineteen paintings, all masterpieces. The collection sold for what would be in our money about half a million dollars.

This is a large sum at any time but in Rubens’ day it was well nigh fabulous.

Rubens has left us more than fifteen hundred pictures bearing his name. That any man could leave so many can be accounted for only by reckoning many of them as largely executed by his pupils. He used to make small sketches in color and hand them over to his pupils for enlargement. He was always at hand to make corrections and, at the end, to give the finishing touches. He used to charge for his pictures according to the time he used in painting them, and he valued his time at fifty according to the time he used in painting them, and he valued his time at fifty dollars a day.

He shows none

of the mystical visionary feeling of the Spaniards even in his religious pictures. He was too much in love with life for that, and so, sometimes, we are offended by stout Flemish Saints and Madonnas too healthy to accord with our notions of their abstemious lives. In his pictures there is spirited action, almost excess of life, and rich unfading color in which the reds largely prevail. His lights are fine but the deep, expressive shadows that made Rembrandt famous are entirely lacking. The softly flowing way in which the color leaves his brush is, perhaps, the most inimitable part of his art. On this account someone has said, who evidently has great reverence for both Velazquez and Rubens, that we will see another Velazquez before another Rubens.

Considering

the qualities of his art, the number of his pictures, his scholarship, his eminence as a diplomat and his pure and honorable life, we must place Rubens among the very greatest men who ever wielded a brush.

QUOTATIONS ABOUT RUBENS.

Rubens was *par excellence* the painter of the group that included the heroes of the Dutch Republic; and, like many of his contemporaries, whilst excelling in his own line, he was, in other respects also, a great man, in a time of and among great men. — Chas. W. Kett.

I cannot

sufficiently admire his personal appearance nor praise his uprightness, his virtue, his erudition and wonderful knowledge of antiquities, his skill and celerity of pencil, and the charm of his manner. — A Contemporary.

His eye is

the most marvellous prism that has ever been given us of the light and color of objects, of true and magnificent ideas. — Eugene Fromentin.

RUBENS by Sarah K. Bolton

Taine says, in his “Philosophy of Art in the Netherlands”: “Rubens is to Titian what Titian was to Raphael, and Raphael was to Phidias. Never did artistic sympathy clasp nature in such an open and universal embrace. Ancient boundaries, already often extended, seem removed purposely to expose an infinite career. He shows no respect for historic proprieties: he groups together allegoric with real figures, and cardinals with a naked Mercury.

RUBENS.

“There is no deference to the moral order; he fills the ideal heaven of mythology and of the Gospel with coarse or mischievous characters; a Magdalen resembling a nurse, and a Ceres whispering some pleasant gossip in her neighbor’s ear. There is no dread of exciting physical sensibility; he pushes the horrible to extremes, ... all the animal instincts of human nature appear; those which had been excluded as gross he reproduces as true, and in him, as in nature, they encounter the others. Nothing is wanting but the pure and the noble; the whole of human nature is in his grasp, save the loftiest heights. Hence it is that this creativeness is the vastest we have seen, comprehending as it does all types, Italian cardinals, Roman emperors, contemporary citizens, peasants and cowherds, along with the innumerable diversities stamped on humanity by the play of natural forces, and which more than fifteen hundred pictures did not suffice to exhaust.

“For the same reason, in the representation of the body, he comprehended more profoundly than any one the essential characteristic of organic life; he surpasses in this the Venetians as they surpass the Florentines; he feels still better than they that flesh is a changeable substance in a constant state of renewal; and such, more than any other, is the Flemish body, lymphatic, sanguine, and voracious; more fluid, more rapidly tending to accretion and waste than those whose dry fibre and radical temperance preserve permanent tissues.

“Hence it is that nobody has depicted its contrasts in stronger relief, nor as visibly shown the decay and bloom of life; at one time the dull, flabby corpse, a genuine clinical mass, empty of blood and substance; livid, blue, and mottled through suffering, a clot of blood on the mouth, the eye glassy, and the feet and hands clayish, swollen, and deformed because death seized them first; at another, the freshness of living carnations, the handsome, blooming, and smiling athlete, the mellow suppleness of a yielding torso in the form of a well-fed youth, the soft rosy cheeks and placid candor of a girl whose blood was never quickened or eyes bedimmed by thought, flocks of dimpled cherubs and merry cupids, the delicacy, the folds, the exquisite melting rosiness of infantile skin, seemingly the petal of a flower moistened with dew and impregnated with morning light.

"His personages speak; their repose itself is suspended on the verge of action; we feel what they have just accomplished, and what they are about to do. The present with them is impregnated with the past and big with the future; not only the whole face, but the entire attitude conspires to manifest the flowing stream of their thought, feeling, and complete being; we hear the inward utterance of their emotion; we might repeat the words to which they give expression. The most fleeting and most subtle shades of sentiment belong to Rubens; in this respect he is a treasure for novelist and psychologist; he took note of the passing refinements of moral expression as well as of the soft volume of sanguine flesh; no one has gone beyond him in knowledge of the living organism and of the animal man....

"There is only one Rubens in Flanders, as there is only one Shakespeare in England. Great as the others are, they are deficient in some one element of his genius."

This great painter, Peter Paul Rubens, whom Sir Joshua Reynolds called "the best workman with his tools that ever managed a pencil," was born at Siegen, June 29, 1577, on the day commemorating the martyrdom of these saints at Rome, hence the names given to the child. Antwerp and Cologne have claimed his birth, but subsequent historical investigation has shown Siegen as his birthplace. Jans Rubens, the father of Peter, was a distinguished councilman and alderman of Antwerp, having taken his degree of Doctor of Laws at Rome when he was thirty-one. When he was about that age he married Marie Pypelincx, a woman of good family, unusual force of character, and the idol of her son Peter as long as she lived.

Antwerp was now the scene of a desolating war. Charles V., Emperor of Germany and King of Spain, had abdicated, leaving the Netherlands to his son Philip II. Religious dissensions, the presence of Spanish soldiers, and other matters, led to revolts, which the Duke of Alva, with twenty thousand soldiers, was sent to suppress in 1576. Seven thousand of the people of Antwerp were slain, and five hundred houses burned.

Jans Rubens had been accused of Calvinistic tendencies, and thought it prudent to retire to Cologne before the arrival at Antwerp of the Roman Catholic Duke of Alva, placing himself on the side of Prince William of Orange, the

Silent, who had married Annie of Saxony. She had quarrelled with her husband, had come to Cologne, and had employed Jans Rubens as one of her counsellors in obtaining her property, which Philip II. had confiscated. Forgetting his high position and his family, Jans Rubens sacrificed his good name and character by his immorality, was arrested and thrown into prison by Count John of Nassau, the brother of Prince William, and Annie was divorced by her husband. By German law Rubens was under the penalty of death. He wrote to his wife, confessing his guilt and imploring her pardon. She determined at once to save his life, if possible. The noble-hearted woman wrote him tenderly — only great souls know how to forgive, —

"How could I push severity to the point of paining you when you are in such affliction that I would give my life to relieve you from it? Even had this misfortune not been preceded by a long affection, ought I to show so much hatred as not to be able to pardon a fault against me?... Be, then, assured that I have entirely forgiven you, and would to Heaven that your deliverance depended on this, for then we should soon be happy again.

"Alas! it is not what your letter announces that affects me. I could scarcely read it. I thought my heart would break. I am so distressed, I hardly know what I write. This sad news so overwhelms me it is with difficulty I can bear it. If there is no more pity in this world, to whom shall I apply? I will implore Heaven with tears and groans, and hope that God will grant my prayer by touching the hearts of these gentlemen, so that they may spare us, may have compassion on us; otherwise, they will kill me as well as you, my soul is so linked to yours that you cannot suffer a pain without my suffering as much as you. I believe that if these good lords saw my tears they would have pity on me, even if they were of stone; and, when all other means fail, I will go to them, although you write me not to do so."

Marie could not reach William the Silent, for he was away in the country, consolidating the Dutch Republic; but she visited in person his mother, and his brother, Count John. All her entreaties availed nothing. It was publicly stated that Jans Rubens had been imprisoned for political treason to Prince William, and must suffer death. Marie was forbidden access to any of William's family, and for two years was not allowed to enter the dungeon where her husband was confined.

At length she declared that the whole truth should be told, and Annie of Saxony be forever disgraced. This threat moved the proud Orange family, and procured the release of Jans Rubens, under bonds of six thousand thalers, that he would never go outside the little town of Siegen. Here he lived for some years, broken in health by his prison life, and under the strict surveillance of Count

John. Finally, Marie obtained permission for them to reside in Cologne, where he died in 1587, when his boy Peter was ten years of age.

The next year Marie Rubens returned to their old home at Antwerp, and by her good sense and persistence recovered the estates of her husband, which had been confiscated during the wars, thus placing her family in very comfortable circumstances. Peter entered a Jesuits’ college, where he showed great aptitude for languages. In childhood he had been taught Latin by his father, and French by a tutor. Later, he learned Italian, Spanish, German, and English, besides, of course, speaking his native Flemish. His mother had destined him for the law, but it was distasteful to him.

At the age of thirteen, as was often the custom, the frank and handsome boy was made a page in the household of his godmother, the Countess Lalaing, but he took no pleasure in mere fashionable surroundings, and begged his mother that he might become an artist.

This choice did not attract the mother, whose ambitions and hopes centred largely in her enthusiastic Peter, but she had the wisdom to lead rather than to dictate. Parents who break the wills of their children usually have spoiled children as the result.

She placed her boy with Tobias Verhaeght, a landscape painter, from whom the lad learned that close study of nature which made him thereafter a reader of her secrets. Conrad Busken Huet says, in his “Land of Rubens”: “Man and nature as the Creator made them were quite sufficient for Rubens’s inspiration, no matter where he found them, far from home or close to it. What attracted him most in nature was the unchangeable, the imperishable, and the grand. He knew how to find these everywhere. Artists less gifted and born by the seashore have before now felt the want of sniffing the mountain breeze. Did their cradle stand among the meadows, they longed for running streams and rivers. Rubens’s pictures prove that such contrasts had no value for him.

“Within the narrow limits of his native soil, he found every condition necessary to the practice of his art. His imagination had no need of anything more stirring than that presented to him by the recollection of human vicissitudes amidst glebe and glade. The twinkling of the eye sufficed to transform them into battlefields in his productions....

“When the sun shines, he shines everywhere. Such is Rubens’s motto. He knows but one moon, but one starry vault, but one gloaming, but one morning dew. Every raindrop on which there falls a ray of light reminds him of a diamond. Each stubble-field whence uprises the lark supplies music to his ears. Each swan to which he flings bread-crumbs on his arrival at ‘Steen’ (his country home) teaches him to keep the most sublime song of his art for the end.”

"It is curious to note that Rubens," says Charles W. Kett, in his "Life of Rubens," "who began with scenes of country life, returned in his last days to his first love, so that when he could no longer cover his huge canvases with heroic figures, he would retire to his château at Steen, and paint landscapes, even though the gout almost incapacitated him from holding his brushes."

After about ten years spent with Verhaeght, young Rubens, thinking that he would devote himself to historical subjects, became a pupil of Adam van Noort, a teacher skilled in drawing, and in the use of brilliant color, with study of light and shade. He is said to have been intemperate and quick-tempered, but for four years Rubens found him a useful teacher.

"It is related," says George H. Calvert, "that one day, when the master was absent, the pupil took a fresh canvas to try what he could do by himself towards representing a weeping Madonna. He worked for hours, and so intently that he did not hear the returning footsteps of the master, who from behind gazed in admiration and wonder at his performance."

The young painter was restless, not an unnatural condition for an ardent, ambitious boy or girl. Such a life, fruitful for good or evil, must be filled with the best activities.

When Rubens was nineteen, he entered the studio of Otto Venius, a kind and learned man, of courtly manners, a free-master of the Guild of St. Luke, and court painter to Archduke Albert of Austria and the Infanta Isabella of Spain. She was the daughter of Philip II., to whom he had ceded the "Spanish Netherlands." They were distinguished patrons of art, and did everything to restore the war-worn country to peace and prosperity. Venius became deeply attached to his pupil, made him acquainted with the Regents Albert and Isabella, and inspired him to go to Italy to study art, the country in which he had studied for seven years.

Rubens had already painted some admirable works: the "Adoration of the Three Kings," a "Holy Trinity," a "Dead Christ in the Arms of the Father," and a portrait of Marie Pypelincx, "the true-hearted wife," says Mr. Kett, "of the faithless Jans, the mother of the artist, the upholder of the family after the death of the father, the educator of his children, and the restorer of the fallen greatness of the name of Rubens. Calmly and beautifully does the pale face still look forth from the canvas as of old. She must have smiled with satisfaction on the rising fame of her youngest surviving son, now going forth into the world to have those talents acknowledged which her maternal heart was assured were in his keeping. Carefully attired, like a matron of good family, in velvet dress, mourning coif, and muslin cuffs, denoting her widowed state, she carries in her face the traits of a shrewd woman of the world, who has battled bravely with the times, and now sees victory crowning her endeavors.

“Her very chair, somewhat similar to the one still preserved in the Academy at Antwerp as the gift of her son, speaks of a home of comfort; her book, held in her still handsome hand, a forefinger marking the page she has not finished reading, tells of a certain amount of learned leisure; and her whole surroundings recall a home whence an artist, a man of culture, and a courteous gentleman might derive those early impressions and first inspirations which would develop, when he came in contact with a larger world, into masterpieces of art.”

On May 8, 1600, Rubens, at twenty-three years of age, having said good-by to his fond mother, started for Italy. His first visit was to Venice, where he studied the wonderful colorists, Titian, Paul Veronese, and Tintoretto. He is said to have copied twenty portraits by Titian, so earnest was he in obtaining the secret of these marvellous tints.

While here he became the friend of a Mantuan, an officer at the court of Vincenzo de Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. This duke was thirty-seven years old, rich, handsome, somewhat of a poet, the patron of artists and authors, a brilliant and extravagant ruler. Through this friend, and also by letters of introduction from Archduke Albert, Rubens met Gonzaga, who was surprised at the learning of the attractive and distinguished-appearing young artist. Hearing him repeat a passage from Virgil, Gonzaga addressed him in Latin, and was answered in the same language, fluently and correctly. The duke had made a fine collection of paintings and antiques, and these Rubens was glad to study. A most fortunate thing resulted from this acquaintance; Rubens was appointed painter to the court and a member of the ducal household.

This was not the result merely of fortuitous circumstances. Rubens had been a student. He was called later by scholars, “the antiquary and Apelles of our time.” He was also a most industrious worker. Philip Rubens, his nephew, says in his life of his uncle, “He never gave himself the pastime of going to parties where there was drinking and card-playing, having always had a dislike for such.” So fond was he of reading the best books, that in after years, when he painted, Seneca and Plutarch were often read to him. He had studied the technique of painting since he was thirteen years old. He was especially charming in manner, being free from harshness or censoriousness, and, withal, a person of much tact and consideration. He had prepared himself for a great work, and was ready to embrace his opportunity when it came.

Besides painting several originals for the Duke of Mantua, Rubens was sent to Rome to make copies of some of the masterpieces. He took letters of introduction to Cardinal Alessandro Montalto, the nephew of Sixtus V., very rich, and a great patron of art.

Besides this work for Gonzaga, Rubens painted for the chapel of St. Helena, in the Church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem, at Rome, at the request of Archduke Albert, formerly its cardinal, three pictures: “St. Helena embracing the Cross,” “Christ crowned with Thorns,” and a “Crucifixion.”

On his return to Mantua, he copied the “Triumph of Julius Cæsar,” by Andrea Mantegna; in one of the series, in place of a sheep walking by the side of an elephant, he painted a lion. Dr. Waagen says in his “Life of Rubens”: “His love of the fantastic and pompous led him to choose that with the elephant carrying the candelabra, but his ardent imagination, ever directed to the dramatic, could not be content with this; instead of a harmless sheep, which in Mantegna is walking by the side of the foremost elephant, Rubens has introduced a lion and lioness, which growl angrily at the elephant. The latter, on his part, is not idle, but, looking furiously round, is on the point of striking the lion a blow with his trunk. The severe pattern he had before him in Mantegna has moderated Rubens in his taste for very full forms, so that they are here more noble and slender than is usual with him. The coloring, as in his earliest pictures, is more subdued than in the later, and yet more powerful. Rubens himself seems to have set a high value upon this study, for it was among his effects at his death.”

In 1603, Rubens was sent by the Duke of Mantua on a pleasant mission to Spain, with costly presents to Philip III., the indolent son of Philip II., and his powerful favorite, the Duke of Lerma. For the king there was a “gorgeous coach and seven beautiful horses, twelve arquebuses, six of whalebone and six variegated, and a vase of rock crystal filled with perfumes.” For the Duke of Lerma, “a number of pictures, a silver vase of large dimensions inwrought with colors, and two vases of gold. For the Countess of Lerma, a cross and two candelabra of rich crystal. For the secretary, Pedro Franqueza, two vases of rock crystal, and a complete set of damask hangings, the edges of gold tissue.”

After a long journey, with continuous rain for twenty-five days, Rubens and his gifts reached Valladolid. When the paintings were unpacked, they were nearly ruined, from the colors having peeled off. At the request of Iberti, resident at the Court of Madrid from Mantua, Rubens undertook the work of restoration, and, better still, painted two originals for the Duke of Lerma, a “Democritus,” and a “Heraclitus,” both life-size, now in the gallery of Madrid. He also painted an equestrian likeness of the duke himself, several ladies of the court, for the gallery of beauties possessed by Gonzaga, and probably many other pictures on this first visit, as more than one hundred and twenty of Rubens’s paintings are known to have existed in Spain. On his return to Italy he was loaded with gifts from the King of Spain and grandees, so much were his works esteemed and so greatly was the young Fleming admired. Once more in Italy, Rubens painted an altarpiece for the Church of the Holy Trinity at Mantua, in which the mother of the duke was buried; three pictures, the “Baptism of our Saviour,” the “Mystery of the Transfiguration,” and a central picture, the “Mystery of the Trinity,” which latter contained portraits of Duke Vincenzo, his Duchess Leonora, his parents, and his children. When the French took Mantua in 1797, this church was used as a storehouse for food for the horses. A French commissary cut this picture in pieces, the better to carry it, and, when about to send it to France, was prevented by the Academy of Mantua. Some of the pieces have disappeared.

Rubens also painted, for the Church of Santa Maria in Valicella, Rome, an altarpiece, representing the “Madonna and Child,” with side pictures of the pope and several saints. In co-operation with his brother Philip, he published, in 1608, a book on Roman antiquities, with six copper-plate illustrations. The pope was so pleased with Rubens that he desired to keep him in Rome permanently.

For the Grand Duke Ferdinand I. of Florence, Rubens painted several pictures, among them a “Hercules between Venus and Minerva.” In Spain he executed a series called “The Labors of Hercules,” besides three separate ones, representing the slaying of the dragon, the struggle with Antæus, and the combat with a lion. He also copied the celebrated cartoon of Leonardo da Vinci, called “The Battle of the Standard,” and made a valuable portrait of himself for the Grand Ducal collection of self-painted heads of artists. At Genoa he made drawings of her remarkable palaces and churches, which he published later in a volume with one hundred and thirty-nine illustrations.

After an absence of eight years in Italy, Rubens was recalled to Antwerp by the illness of his mother. He started homeward October 28, 1608, with a heavy heart. On his way he learned that she had died nine days before he began his long journey.

On reaching Antwerp, he shut himself up for four months in the Abbey of St. Michael’s, where she had been buried. He had given her no ordinary affection, and his was no ordinary loss. He met this loss in the silence of his own thoughts in the abbey, and when he had gained the self-control necessary for his work, he came out into the world. Most of us learn to bear our sorrows in our own hearts, without laying our burdens upon others, finding, sooner or later, that the world has enough of its own.

He talked of returning to Italy, but Archduke Albert and Isabella, proud of his genius and his attainments, invited him to court, sat for their portraits, and made him their official painter. One of his first works for them was a “Holy Family,” which was so much admired that the Society of St. Ildefonso of Brussels, Archduke Albert being its head, ordered an altarpiece for the Chapel of the order of St. James. “This picture,” says Dr. Waagen, “which is at present in the

Imperial gallery at Vienna, represents the Virgin Mary enthroned, and putting the cloak of the order on the shoulders of St. Ildefonso. She is surrounded by four female saints. On the interior of the wings are the portraits of Albert and Isabella, with their patron saints. This work, one of the most admirable ever painted by Rubens, displays in a remarkable degree the qualities praised in the one painted for the Archduke.”

The association were so pleased that they offered the artist a purse of gold, which, having been made a member, he would not receive, saying that his only desire was to be useful to his brother members.

Lonely from the death of his mother, a new affection came into his heart to sustain and console him. Philip, his brother, now secretary of Antwerp, had taken as his wife Maria de Moy, whose sister, Clara, much older, had married a former secretary of Antwerp, Jan Brandt. Their daughter, Isabella Brandt, was a young woman of attractive face and sweet disposition. Peter naturally met the niece of his brother Philip’s wife, loved her, and married her October 13, 1609, in the Abbey Church of St. Michael, when he was thirty-two.

He soon built a house, costing sixty thousand florins, in the Italian style of architecture, with a spacious studio, and a separate building or rotunda, like the Pantheon at Rome, lighted from the top, where he arranged the pictures, marbles, vases, and gems which he had collected in Italy. Adjoining this he laid out a large garden, planted with flowers and choice trees.

“The celebrated picture of Rubens and his first wife,” says Mr. Kett, “now in the Pinakothek at Munich, must have been painted within the first few years of their married life, and is a striking example of the painter’s manner at this period. His calm serenity and thoughtful expression, combined with beauty and force of character, are well balanced by the placid contentment and happy dignity of his wife, as the pair sit under their own vine and fig-tree, prepared to receive their visitors. There is no affected demonstration of feeling, no bashful restraint. A couple well-to-do and able to enjoy themselves are happy to share their pleasure with others.”

In 1611, Rubens met with a severe loss in the death of his greatly beloved brother, Philip. All the seven children of Jans Rubens and Maria Pypelincx were now dead save Peter Paul.

In 1614, Rubens’s heart was made glad by the birth of a son, to whom Archduke Albert became godfather, and gave him his own name. Four years later his only other child by Isabella Brandt was born, both of whom survived their father. A beautiful painting of these two children is now in the Liechtenstein Gallery, in Vienna.

The rich and famous painter was now happy, surrounded by his loved ones, busy constantly with his work, which poured in upon him. In summer he rose at four o’clock, heard mass, and went to work early. Says Dr. Waagen, “This was the time when he generally received his visitors, with whom he entered willingly into conversation on a variety of topics, in the most animated and agreeable manner. An hour before dinner he always devoted to recreation, which consisted either in allowing his thoughts to dwell as they listed on subjects connected with science or politics, which latter interested him deeply, or in contemplating his treasures of art. From anxiety not to impair the brilliant play of his fancy, he indulged but sparingly in the pleasures of the table, and drank but little wine. After working again till the evening, he usually, if not prevented by business, mounted a spirited Andalusian horse, and rode for an hour or two.

“This was his favorite exercise; he was extremely fond of horses, and his stables generally contained some of remarkable beauty. On his return home, it was his custom to receive a few friends, principally men of learning or artists, with whom he shared his frugal meal, and afterwards passed the evening in instructive and cheerful conversation. This active and regular mode of life could alone have enabled Rubens to satisfy all the demands that were made upon him as an artist, and the astonishing number of works that he completed, the genuineness of which is beyond all doubt, can only be accounted for by this union of extraordinary diligence with his unusually fertile powers of production.”

In building his home, Rubens encroached a little on land owned by the Company of Arquebusiers of Antwerp. A lawsuit was threatened, but finally a compromise was effected whereby Rubens agreed to paint a triptych, that is, a picture in three parts, of their patron St. Christopher, to be hung in the cathedral. In fulfilment of this contract, he painted the renowned “Descent from the Cross,” now in the south end of the transept of the cathedral, with St. Simon on one wing of the triptych, and “The Visitation” on the other, with St. Christopher in person.

Says Huet: “Playing upon the name of a patron saint, he has represented a threefold ‘bearing of Christ’; Christ borne from the Cross in the centre; Christ borne by old Simon on the right; Christ borne ‘‘neath his mother’s heart’ on the left wing.... There is no need to insist as to how Rubens acquitted himself of his task in the centre piece. Da Vinci’s ‘Last Supper’ and Rubens’s ‘Descent from the Cross’ are the two most popular altarpieces of Christianity, admired alike by Protestant and Catholic. For the history of Flemish art this ‘Descent’ possesses as much value as does Goethe’s ‘Faust’ for the history of German literature. No one has succeeded in painting subsequent to Rubens a ‘Descent from the Cross’ without paying toll to the master.... It is the triumph of human sympathy expressed in accordance with the theory of line and color. The painter had no other aim than to limn a perfect group of loving people, occupied in taking down the body of Christ. He does not portray your sorrow, but theirs. What he tenders us is sentiment, not sentimentality; emotion, not intellect. The allusion to St. Christopher must be disinterred from encyclopædias; the recollection of John in his red cloak, carrying his burden, of the fair-haired Mary Magdalen, of the disciple with the winding-sheet betwixt his teeth, has become immortal.

“The lovely mother-virgin of the left-hand side leaf deserves particular attention.... I know of no more fascinating female figure from Rubens’s brush; none which in its Flemish guise is so original, so wholly his. The ‘Descent from the Cross’ itself one might still believe to be the work of one of the great Italians. No such mistake is possible with the side leaf. What excites our wonder in Goethe is his succeeding in raising a Leipzig girl of the lower classes to the rank of a tragic heroine, the very mention of whose name suffices to remind us of an imperishable type. Rubens’s pregnant Mary is an honorable Gretchen. He created her out of the most hidden depths of human nature, where blood and soul, mind and matter, melt into one. When Jordaens wishes to paint fertility, he resorts to the allegory of the schools. To Rubens life itself is the best of all allegories. Mary’s clinging for support to the railing of the staircase, as she ascends it, is a hymn in honor of maternity. In the course of ages pictorial art has produced many beautiful works, none more beautiful than that scene.”

About this time Rubens painted some of his greatest works. “Our Saviour giving the Keys to St. Peter” was originally placed in the Cathedral of St. Gudule; it was sold in 1824 to the Prince of Orange, for one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. An “Elevation of the Cross,” an immense picture, executed for the Church of St. Walburg, at Antwerp, is now in the north transept of the cathedral. He painted an “Adoration of the Magi” for the choir of the Abbey Church of St. Michael, dear to him from the burial of his mother and his own marriage, and a similar picture for the Church of St. John at Malines.

Of an “Adoration of the Magi” in the Museum at Antwerp, Eugène Fromentin says: “It is truly a *tour de force*, especially if one recalls the rapidity of this work of improvisation. Not a gap, not a strain; a vast, clear half-tint and lights without excess envelop all the figures, supporting one the other; all the colors are visible and multiply values the most rare, the least sought and yet the most fit, the most subtle and yet the most distinct. By the side of types that are very ugly swarm superior types. With his square face, his thick lips, his reddish skin, big eyes strongly lighted up, and his stout body girt in green pelisse with sleeves of peacock blue, this African among the Magi is a figure entirely new, before which, assuredly, Tintoretto, Titian, Veronese would have clapped their hands.

“On the left stand in dignified solemnity two colossal cavaliers of a singular

Anglo-Flemish style, the most extraordinary piece of color in the picture, with its dull harmony of black, greenish blue, of brown and white. Add the profile of the Nubian camel-drivers, the supernumeraries, men in helmets, negroes, the whole in the most ample, the most transparent, the most natural of atmospheres. Spider-webs float in the framework, and quite low down the head of the ox, — a sketch achieved by a few strokes of the brush in bitumen, — without more importance and not otherwise executed than would be a hasty signature. The Child is delicious; to be cited as one of the most beautiful among the purely picturesque compositions of Rubens, the last word of his knowledge as to color, of his skill as to technique, when his sight was clear and instantaneous, his hand rapid and careful, and when he was not too exacting, the triumph of rapture and science — in a word, of self-confidence."

Rubens had courage. He used to say: "Every one according to his gift; my talent is such that never yet has an undertaking, however extraordinary in size or diversity of subjects, daunted my courage."

The "Assumption of the Virgin" in the Antwerp Cathedral, Dr. Waagen says, "may be said to produce the same effect as a symphony, in which the united sounds of all the instruments blend together joyously, divinely, mightily. No other painter has ever known how to produce such a full and satisfactory tone of light, such a deep chiaro-oscuro united with such general brilliancy."

"St. Theresa pleading for the Souls in Purgatory," "St. Anne instructing the Virgin," and the "Dead Saviour laid on a Stone," are now at Antwerp. Five of the above pictures and three others, "Christ on the Cross," "The Resurrection of our Saviour," and "The Adoration of the Shepherds," were painted in eighteen days, Rubens receiving as compensation fifty dollars per day, his usual price.

For a magnificent church built by the Jesuits, Rubens painted two works for the high altar, pictures for two other altars, and thirty-nine ceilings with Bible scenes, including the "Assumption" and "Coronation of the Virgin," the "Translation of Elijah," and the "Archangel Michael triumphing over the Serpent." These works with the church were all destroyed by fire, caused by lightning, in 1718.

With all this prosperity it was not strange that envy and jealousy should now and then confront Rubens. One of his rivals invited him to paint a picture on some chosen subject, and allow umpires to decide which was the better work. Rubens replied to the challenge: "My attempts have been subjected to the scrutiny of *connoisseurs* in Italy and Spain. They are to be found in public collections and private galleries in those countries; gentlemen are at liberty to place their works beside them, in order that the comparison be made."

The great artist used to say, "Do well, and people will be jealous of you; do better, and you confound them."

He employed several pupils to help him constantly. He would make sketches and superintend the work, adding the finishing touches. Having been asked to paint for the Cathedral of Malines a "Last Supper," Rubens made the drawing and sent it to one of his pupils, Juste van Egmont, to lay on the ground color. The canon of the cathedral said to Van Egmont, "Why did your master not come himself?" "Don't be uneasy," was the reply. "He will, as is his custom, finish the picture."

Egmont went on with the work, when finally the canon, in a rage, ordered him to stop, while he wrote to Rubens: "'Twas a picture by your own hand I ordered, not an attempt by an apprentice. Come, then, and handle the brush yourself: or recall your Juste van Egmont, and tell him to take with him his sketch; my intention being not to accept it, you can keep it for yourself."

Rubens wrote back: "I proceed always in this way; after having made the drawing, I let my pupils begin the picture, finish even, according to my principles; then I retouch it, and give it my stamp. I shall go to Malines in a few days; your dissatisfaction will cease." Rubens came, and the canon was satisfied.

Mr. Kett says: "Rubens's method of painting was his own. Some of his fellow-countrymen, who were jealous of him, said he did not use paints, but colored varnishes, and that his pictures would not last; of the latter point we are the better judges. He used light grounds, almost, if not quite white; his outlines were drawn with a brush in color (often red for the flesh), and very transparent glazes were laid over all the shadows, the lights being sometimes, not always, painted thicker. He exposed his pictures to the sun for short spaces of time, between the paintings, to dry out the oil. They received several coats of color, and then, finally, he put in the stronger touches himself, the light ones now thick. All his works, however, do not seem to have been done in this way, but many have solid painting from the first."

Rubens had become both rich and famous. When an alchemist visited him, urging that he furnish a laboratory and apparatus for the process of transmutation of metals, and share the profits, the painter replied: "You have come twenty years too late; I found out the secret long ago;" and then, pointing to his palette and brushes, he added, "Everything I touch with these turns to gold."

A new honor was now conferred upon Rubens. Marie de' Medici, the sister of the Duchess Leonora of Mantua, wished to adorn her palace of the Luxembourg, in Paris, with great magnificence. Henry, Baron Vicq, the ambassador of the Archduke Albert and Isabella, spoke to Queen Marie of Rubens. She must have known of his work, also, when he was the court painter of Mantua. He was summoned to Paris, and took the order for twenty-two immense pictures, illustrative of her life. These are now in the Louvre, full of vigor, brilliant in imagery, and rich in color.

In the first picture the three Fates spin the fortunes of Marie de' Medici; the second represents her birth at Florence, in 1575, Lucina, the goddess of births, being present with her torch, while Florentia, the goddess of the city, holds the new-born infant; the third, her education, conducted by Minerva, Apollo, and Mercury; fourth, Love shows the princess the portrait of Henry IV., whom she married in 1600, after he had been divorced from Margaret of Valois, in the preceding year; above are Jupiter and Juno; beside the king appears Gallia; fifth shows the nuptials; the Grand Duke Ferdinand of Tuscany acts as proxy for his niece's husband; sixth, the queen lands at Marseilles; seventh, the wedding festival, at Lyons, with Henry IV. as Jupiter, and Marie as Juno; eighth, the birth of Louis XIII., in 1601, with Fortuna behind the queen; ninth, Henry IV. starting on his campaign against Germany, in 1610, when he makes the queen regent; tenth, coronation of the queen at St. Denis; eleventh, apotheosis of Henry IV., who was stabbed by Ravaillac, it is said, not against the queen's wishes, who, nevertheless, in the picture is enthroned in mourning robes between Minerva and Wisdom; twelfth, regency of the queen under the protection of Olympus; Mars, Apollo, and Minerva drive away the hostile powers, while Juno and Jupiter cause the chariot of France to be drawn by gentle doves; thirteenth, the queen in the field during the civil war in France; fourteenth, treaty between France and Spain; fifteenth, prosperity during the regency, the queen bearing the scales of justice with Minerva, Fortuna, and Abundantia on the right, Gallia and Time on the left, while below are Envy, Hatred, and Stupidity; sixteenth, the queen commits the rudder of the Ship of State, rowed by the Virtues, to Louis XIII., who certainly must have deserted these virtues early in his career; seventeenth, flight of the queen, in 1619, to Blois, where the wily Cardinal Richelieu joined her as a pretended friend; eighteenth, Mercury presents himself to the queen as a messenger of peace; nineteenth, the queen is conducted into the temple of peace; twentieth, Marie and Louis XIII. on Olympus, with the dragon of rebellion below them; twenty-first, the king giving his mother a chaplet of peace; twenty-second, portrait of Marie; followed by portraits of her parents, Grand Duke Francis and Johanna, Grand Duchess of Tuscany.

Fortunately, Rubens could not paint the sad future of Marie de' Medici. She died in a poor apartment at Cologne, deserted by her family. The queen was delighted with Rubens's pictures, taking lessons of him in drawing, and often conversing with him while he made the sketches, the painting being done by himself and his pupils in his studio at Antwerp, in about two years and a half.

The queen had intended to adorn another gallery at the Luxembourg with the life of Henry IV., but the project was abandoned in consequence of the quarrel between Marie and Cardinal Richelieu.

Rubens painted other pictures while at work on the Medici allegory: “Susannah and the Elders,” “Lot’s Daughters,” a beautiful “Virgin and Child” for Baron de Vicq, who had recommended him to Marie de’ Medici, and several other works.

In his “Kermess” now in the Louvre, a peasant festival in Flanders, “in front of a village inn about fourscore persons of both sexes are depicted, intermingled in varieties of groups, in the full swing of boisterous enjoyment after a better meal than peasants are used to, singing, dancing, talking, shouting, gambolling, love-making. A large, serious dog tries to get his share by prying into a pail half filled with empty platters. An abounding scene of rustic revelry, in the groups and individuals a character and expression which only warm genius animating rich intellectual resources could give.”

Rubens delighted in painting animals. “It is related,” says Calvert, “that he caused to be brought to his house a very fine and powerful lion that he might study him in his various attitudes. But what he had still greater delight in painting than animals was children. Here, too, as with animals, and in a higher form, he had what a healthy, juicy mind like his revelled in, nature unsophisticated. It may have been in front of one of his canvases glowing with the luminous rosiness of half a dozen of these happy soul-buds that Guido exclaimed, ‘Does Rubens mix blood with his paint?’ The mobility of children, their naturalness, their unveiled life and innocence, humanity in its heavenly promise, laughing incarnations of hope, all appealed to his liveliest sympathies, as to his artistic preferences.”

He was skilled, also, in portraits. Mr. Kett says the picture of his mother, in the Dulwich Gallery, the “Spanish Hat,” in the National Gallery, and the portrait called “General Velasquez” “are three that could scarcely be excelled by any master of any time.”

Dr. Waagen says of “*Le Chapeau de Poil*” (“The Spanish Hat”), “No picture justifies more than this the appellation which Rubens has obtained of ‘The Painter of Light.’ No one who has not beheld this masterpiece of painting can form any conception of the transparency and brilliancy with which the local coloring in the features and complexion, though under the shadow of a broad-brimmed Spanish beaver hat, are brought out and made to tell, while the different parts are rounded and relieved with the finest knowledge and use of reflected lights. The expression of those youthful features, beaming with cheerfulness, is so full of life, and has such a perfect charm, that one is inclined to believe the tradition that Rubens fell in love with the original (a young girl of the Lunden family, at Antwerp) whilst she was sitting to him.”

Mrs. Jameson says, “The picture as a picture is miraculous, all but life itself.... Rubens, during his life, would never part with this picture.... After the death of his widow, it passed into the possession of the Lunden family, whose heir, M. Van Havre, sold it in 1817, for sixty thousand francs, to another descendant of the family, M. Stier d’Artselaer. At his death, in 1822, it was sold by auction and purchased by M. Niewenhuys for seventy-five thousand francs, and brought to England, where, after being offered in vain to George IV., it was bought by Sir Robert Peel for three thousand five hundred guineas....

“To venture to judge Rubens, we ought to have seen many of his pictures. His defects may be acknowledged once for all. They are in all senses gross, open, palpable; his florid color, dazzling and garish in its indiscriminate excess; his exaggerated, redundant forms; his coarse allegories; his historical improprieties; his vulgar and prosaic versions of the loftiest and most delicate creations of poetry; let all these be granted, but this man painted that sublime history (a series of six pictures), almost faultless in conception and in costume, the ‘Decius’ in the Liechtenstein Gallery. This man, who has been called unpoetical, and who was a born poet, if ever there was one, conceived that magnificent epic, the ‘Battle of the Amazons;’ that divine lyric, the ‘Virgin Mary’ trampling sin and the dragon, in the Munich Gallery, which might be styled a Pindaric Ode in honor of the Virgin, only painted instead of sung; and those tenderest moral poems, the ‘St. Theresa’ pleading for the souls in Purgatory, and the little sketch of ‘War,’ where a woman sits desolate on the black, wide heath, with dead bodies and implements of war heaped in shadowy masses around her, while, just seen against the lurid streak of light left by the setting sun, the battle rages in the far distance....

“Though thus dramatic in the strongest sense, yet he is so without approaching the verge of what we call theatrical. With all his flaunting luxuriance of color, and occasional exaggeration in form, we cannot apply that word to him. Le Bran is theatrical; Rubens, never. His sins are those of excess of daring and power; but he is ever the reverse of the flimsy, the artificial, or the superficial. His gay magnificence and sumptuous fancy are always accompanied by a certain impress and assurance of power and grandeur, which often reaches the sublime, even when it stops short of the ideal.”

A few months after the paintings were finished for Marie de’ Medici, a great sorrow came to the Rubens mansion. Isabella Brandt, his wife, died in the middle of the year 1626, leaving two sons, Albert and Nicholas, twelve and eight years of age. She was buried with much display in the Abbey Church of St. Michael, where she had been married, — in the same tomb with his mother and his brother Philip, and her husband dedicated a beautiful “Virgin and Child” to her memory. He wrote to a friend, sadly, in regard to her whom he had lost, as one “not having any of the vices of her sex. She was without bad temper or feminine frivolity, but was in every way good and honorable — in life loved on account of her virtues, and since her death universally bewailed by all. Such a loss seems to me worthy of sympathy, and because the true remedy for all evils is forgetfulness, the daughter of time, one must without doubt hope for relief; but I find the separation of grief for the departed from the memory of a person whom I ought to revere and honor whilst I live, to be very difficult.”

Partly to distract his mind from his grief, and partly to assist his own country, to which he was devotedly attached, to keep peace with the powers at war, which made Belgium their battle-ground, at the request of the Infanta Isabella he visited Holland on a diplomatic mission, and, a little later, Spain and England. The King of Spain had already ennobled Rubens. “Regard being had to the great renown which he has merited and acquired by excellence in the art of painting, and rare experience in the same, as also by the knowledge which he has of histories and languages, and other fine qualities and parts which he possesses, and which render him worthy of our royal favor, we have granted and do grant to the said Peter Paul Rubens and his children and posterity, male and female, the said title and degree of nobility.” In consequence of this, Isabella had made him “gentleman of her household.”

In this his second visit to Spain, he is said to have painted forty pictures in nine months. Rubens and Velasquez became intimate friends, although the former was fifty-one, and the latter twenty-eight.

A little later he was sent by Philip IV. of Spain, who had appointed Rubens secretary to his privy council, on a mission to England. Here he was discovered by a courtier, one morning, busy at his painting. “Ho!” said the courtier, “does his Most Catholic Majesty’s representative amuse himself with painting?”

“No,” answered Rubens, “the artist sometimes amuses himself with diplomacy.”

Rubens painted for King Charles I., “Diana and her Nymphs surprised by Satyrs,” and “Peace and Plenty,” which latter, after remaining in Italy for a century, was finally bought by the Marquis of Stafford, for fifteen thousand dollars, and by him presented to the National Gallery. Rubens also made nine sketches for pictures ordered by the king to decorate the ceiling of the throne-room of Whitehall, illustrating the deeds of James I. These cost fifteen thousand dollars.

King Charles knighted the famous painter, and after the ceremony presented him with the sword, a handsome service of plate, a diamond ring, and a rich chain to which was attached a miniature of the king; this he ever afterwards wore round his neck.

At Cambridge University he was received by Lord Holland, the Chancellor, and admitted to the honorary degree of Master of Arts.

As a diplomatist, M. Villoamil says, “Rubens had great tact, was prudent, active, forbearing, and patient to the last degree, and, above all, throwing aside all personality, how exclusively careful he was neither to exceed nor fall short of the line laid down to him from Spain, softening, when it seemed harsh, what the Count Duke (Olivarezs) had charged him to communicate, and even taking on himself faults and errors which he had not committed, when by such assumption he could advance his objects and gain the ends he had in view in the service of Spain.”

How few in this world learn the beauty and the power of being “patient to the last degree!” How few learn early in life to avoid gossip, to speak well of others, and to make peace!

In 1630, four years after the death of Isabella Brandt, Rubens married her sister’s daughter, Helena Fourment, a wealthy girl of sixteen, while the painter was fifty-three. He seems to have thought her beautiful, as she appears in nearly all his subsequent paintings. At Blenheim are two portraits of the fair Helena: one, representing himself and his wife in a flower garden with their little child, Dr. Waagen regards as one of the most perfect family pictures in the world.

In the Belvidere, Vienna, is a magnificent portrait of Helena Fourment. She bore to Rubens five children in the ten remaining years of his life.

He soon bought a lovely country home, the Château de Steen at Elewyt, which was sold at his death for forty thousand dollars. “It was,” says Huet, “a feudal castle, surrounded on all sides with water. Rubens, though nothing need have prevented him from demolishing the castle and erecting an Italian villa on its site, respected its mediæval architecture. One may take it that the mediæval turrets and the mediæval moat made up, according to him, an agreeable whole with the sylvan surroundings. An imagination like his felt at home everywhere. The principal charm of ‘Steen’ lay in its being but a day’s journey from Antwerp, — that there wife and children could breathe the beneficent country air in unstinted draughts, and the artist himself could indulge his leisure and find new subjects. It is all but certain that the idyl of ‘The Rainbow’ and the bacchanalia of ‘The Village Fair’ were painted nowhere else but at Steen....

“Though the two centuries and a half that have elapsed since then have altered the means of locomotion and communication so thoroughly as to make them difficult of recognition, it needs no great effort of the imagination to follow the Rubens family from stage to stage on its flitting to the summer quarters. We can fancy him sitting one of those splendid horses he so magnificently bestrode. A team of four or six less costly, but well-fed, well-groomed, and well-equipped cattle drags through the loose sand or heavy clay the still heavier coach, where, between children and nursemaids, thrones the mistress of the house, not very securely; for she, like the rest, is considerably jolted. She wears the large hat with feathers, beneath which the charming face meets the spectators, as in the picture in the Louvre. A solid train with provisions for the long journey brings up the rear of the procession. Proud of his young wife, anxious as to her every want, the great artist, whose hair and beard are plentifully besprinkled with gray, does not leave the carriage door by her side."

During the last years of his life Rubens suffered much from gout, but, with the help of his pupils, he accomplished a great amount of work. Many of his scholars became famous: Van Dyck, Jordaens, Snyders, Teniers, and others.

Van Dyck was twenty-two years younger than Rubens, and entered his studio when he was seventeen. In four years his works began to be almost as much esteemed as those of his master. It is said that one day, during the absence of Rubens from his studio, the pupils, crowding around a freshly painted picture, pushed against it, thus effacing the arm and chin of a Virgin. They were greatly distressed over the matter, when Van Hoeck cried out: "Van Dyck is the handiest; he must repair the mischief." The restoration was so deftly made that Rubens did not observe the accident.

Later, when Van Dyck came back from Italy, after five years of study there, he found little sale for his pictures, and was depressed. Rubens went to his studio, comforted him, and bought all his paintings which were finished. He did the same thing with a rival who had maligned him because he was not as successful as the great painter. When Rubens died, he owned in his gallery over three hundred pictures, many by Titian, Paul Veronese, Tintoretto, and Van Dyck, and ninety by his own hand.

In 1635, when Philip IV. of Spain had appointed as governor of the Netherlands his own brother, the Cardinal Infanta Ferdinand, Sir Peter Paul Rubens was deputed to design the triumphal arches and ornamental temples for his solemn entry into Antwerp. These beautiful designs were afterwards engraved and published, with a learned Latin description by his friend Gevaerts, though they were not ready for the press till the year after Rubens's death. On the day when Ferdinand entered Antwerp, Rubens was ill at his house, but the new governor showed his appreciation of his talent and learning by calling upon him in his own home, as Queen Marie de' Medici, the Infanta Isabella, and other famous persons had done.

His last piece of work was the "Crucifixion of St. Peter," for St. Peter's

Church at Cologne. He asked for a year and a half to complete the picture, but death came before it was finished. It represents the apostle nailed to the cross with his head downwards, surrounded by six executioners. “He has proved,” says Gustave Planche, “over and over again that he knew all the secrets of the human form, but never has he proved it so clearly as in the Crucifixion of Peter.”

May 30, 1640, Antwerp was in mourning for her world-renowned painter. He was buried at night, as was the custom, a great concourse of citizens, all the artistic and literary societies, and sixty orphan children with torches, following his body to the grave. It was temporarily placed in the vault of the Fourment family, and March 4, 1642, was removed to a special chapel built by his wife in the Church of St. James in Antwerp. At his own request, made three days before his death, a “Holy Family,” one of his best works, was hung above his resting-place. In the picture, St. George is a portrait of himself, St. Jerome of his father, an angel of his youngest son, and Martha and Mary of Isabella and Helena, his two wives. “A group of tiny angels, floating in the air, crown the Holy Child with a wreath of flowers.”

The learned nephew of Rubens, Gevaerts, wrote the following epitaph, in Latin, now inscribed on his monument: —

“Here lies Peter Paul Rubens, knight, and Lord of Steen, son of John Rubens, a senator of this city. Gifted with marvellous talents, versed in ancient history, a master of all the liberal arts and of the elegancies of life, he deserved to be called the Apelles of his age and of all ages. He won for himself the good will of monarchs and of princely men. Philip IV., King of Spain and the Indies, appointed him secretary of his Privy Council, and sent him on an embassy to the King of England in 1629, when he happily laid the foundation of the peace that was soon concluded between those two sovereigns. He died in the year of salvation 1640, on the 30th of May, aged sixty-three years.”

The wife of Rubens afterwards married John Baptist Broechoven, Baron van Bergeyck, an ambassador in England in the reign of Charles II.

Rubens left his large collection of sketches to whichever of his sons might become an artist, or whichever of his daughters might marry an artist, but not one fulfilled the conditions.

Two hundred years after Rubens’s death, in 1870, a monument was erected to his memory in one of the public squares of Antwerp, and in 1877 a memorial festival was held in his honor in the same city.

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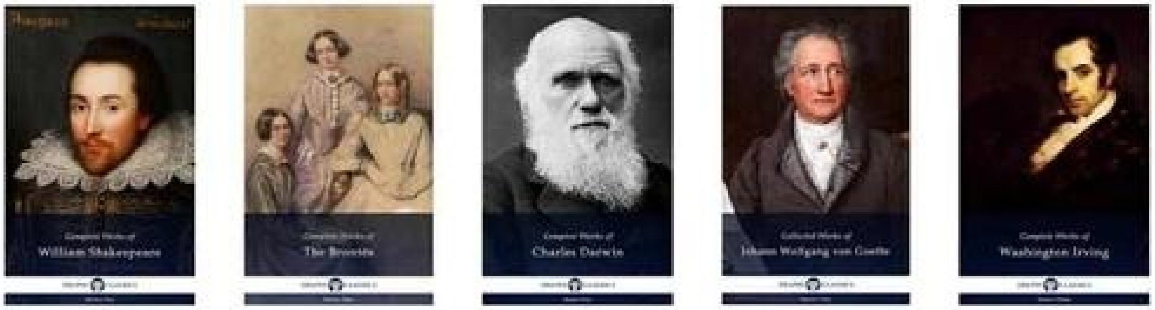
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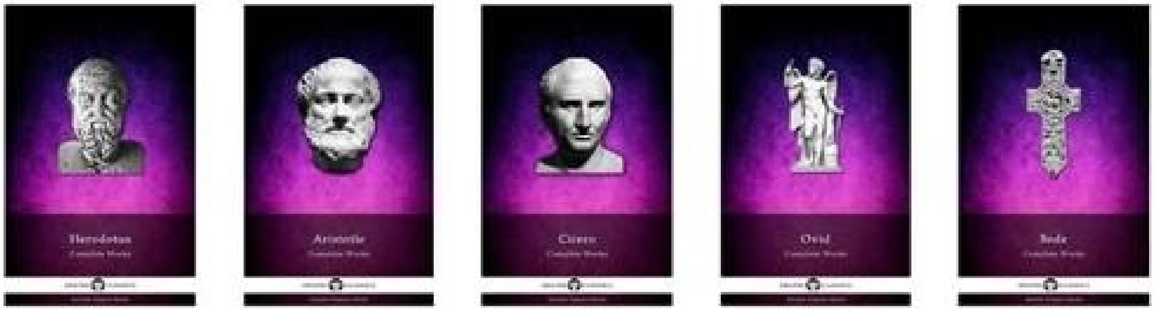
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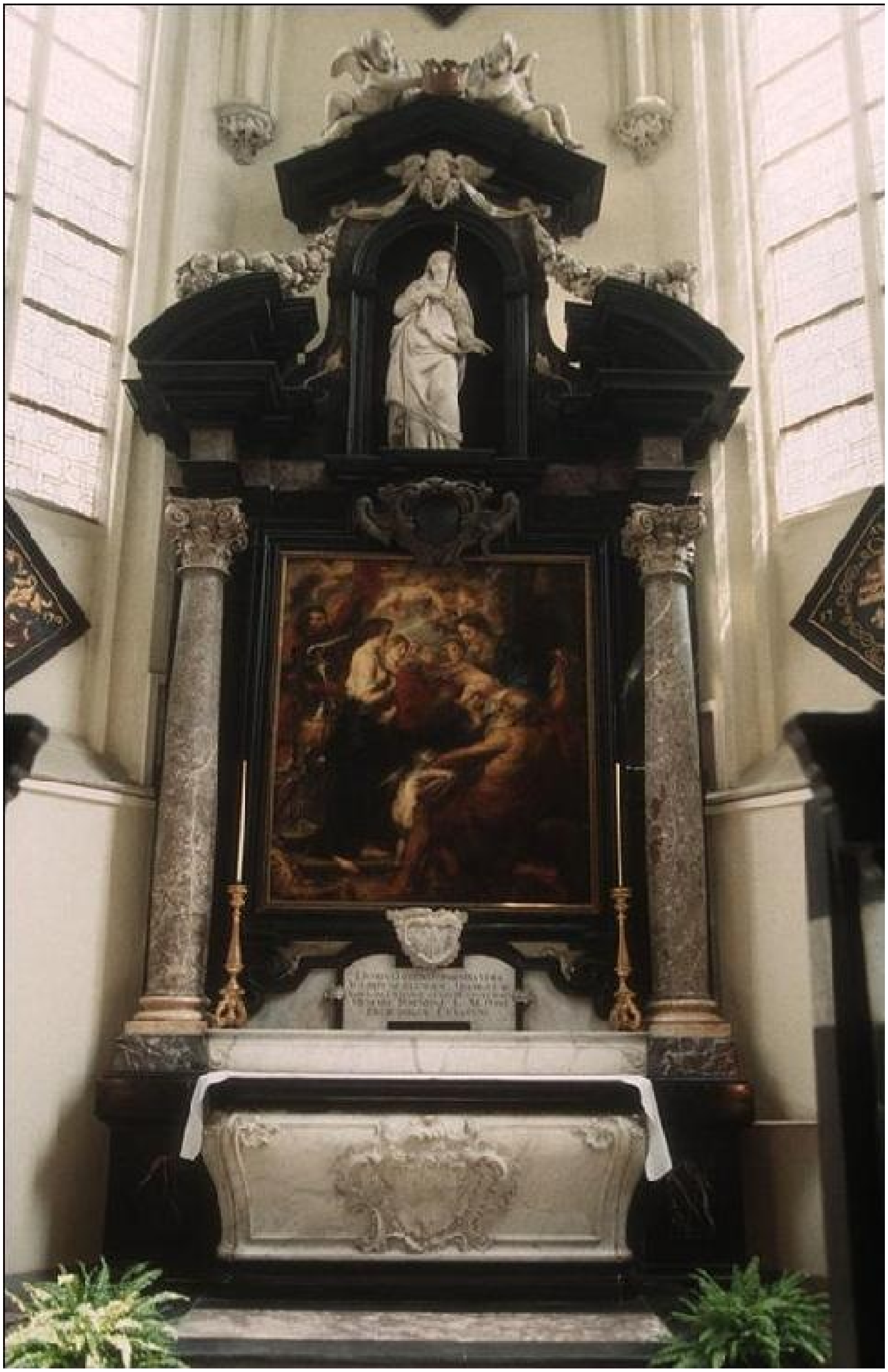
Saint Jacob’s Church, Antwerp — Rubens’ final resting place



Rubens' grave